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Regent receives call from Saleh

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Sunday received a telephone call from Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who congratulated the Crown Prince on His Majesty King Hussein's full recovery. Saleh wished King Hussein a safe return home.

Strikes on Iraq were 'mistake' — French FM

PARIS (AFP) — The U.S.-British strikes on Iraq last month were a "mistake" which "resolved nothing... [and] weakened the authority of the U.N. Security Council," French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine said Sunday. Vedrine, making the remarks to the French commercial radio station Europe 1, said the attacks were a "unilateral decision" by the United States and Britain. "On Iraq, the U.S. approach is to inflict punishment, whereas our approach is to look for a solution," said Vedrine. He added France was the only country with "a vision" to end the crisis between Iraq and international community.

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Centre-left PDP wins Nigerian state elections

LAGOS (AFP) — The centre-left Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) won Nigeria's weekend regional elections, confirming its place as the country's leading political party, official election results showed Sunday. With 33 of 35 states having declared results Sunday, the PDP of former military ruler General Olusegun Obasanjo won 18 governorships, against nine for the centre-right All Peoples Party and six for the radical Alliance for Democracy. (See story on page 4)

More than 90 massacred in Colombia

BOGOTA (R) — Churchgoers were among the latest victims of Colombia's right-wing death squads, who have killed more than 90 people in a bloody rampage across four northern provinces since Thursday, authorities said on Sunday. The most horrifying incident occurred in Playon de Grotto, a village in Magdalena province, where alleged members of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) slaughtered at least 21 people on Saturday.

Kuwait journalists brand Israel visit 'irresponsible'

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait's journalists' association Sunday branded a visit by one of its members to Israel "an irresponsible act" and warned it would "take appropriate measures." Hamed Buyabes' visit to the Jewish state creates "a dangerous precedent and harms Kuwait's press which refuses all contact with the Zionist enemy," said a statement quoted by the official KUNA news agency. Buyabes told Arabic newspapers in London that he had visited Israel in mid-December for interviews with its leadership, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

DNA tests end rumours Clinton fathered child

WASHINGTON (AFP) — DNA tests have proved that U.S. President Bill Clinton did not father the son of a former prostitute, Time magazine reported Sunday. The weekly reported that tests showed blood samples taken from Bobbie Ann Williams and her 13-year-old son Danny did not match the president's DNA. "There was no match. Not even close," the news magazine reported, citing a source at the tabloid Star newspaper which authorised the tests. The report ends years of speculation over the affair — accounts of which first surfaced in U.S. tabloid newspapers in 1992.

Senator calls impeachment 'pile of dung'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — In an unusually blunt remark, a leading Democratic senator on Sunday called the House move to impeach President Bill Clinton a "pile of dung." Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa told Fox television that the Senate's unanimous vote on Friday to begin the impeachment trial later this week "in no way legitimises the sham, partisan action taken by the House." "All we can do is hope to cloak ourselves with some dignity in handling this pile of dung, if I might use that phrase, that a reckless, partisan House has handed us," he said.

New clashes in Hebron over Israeli security clampdown

HEBRON (Agencies) — Hundreds of Palestinians protesting a week-long curfew on the Israeli-occupied sector of Hebron rained rocks and bottles Sunday on Israeli soldiers, who fired teargas and rubber-encased metal bullets in response, witnesses said. No injuries were immediately reported. Sporadic clashes have occurred almost daily in Hebron since the army imposed the curfew on the more than 20,000 Palestinians living in the Israeli-controlled sector on Jan. 4 following a shooting attack which wounded two Israeli women in the area.



Sara Reschly, 26, from Mount Pleasant, Iowa, right, screams Sunday at Israeli border policemen, telling them not to shoot at Palestinian demonstrators during a march in the West Bank town of Hebron. Reschly and another member of a Chicago based human-rights organisation, Christian Peacemaker Teams, were detained for interfering with the police (AP photo)

The army also sealed off entrances to the 80 per cent of Hebron which was turned over to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in January 1997. Early Sunday Israel eased the closure on Palestinian-ruled Hebron by permitting around 6,000 workers and businessmen who have permits to enter Israel to leave the city, the army said.

A certain number of cargo trucks may also now travel between Hebron and the Gaza Strip, it said. Despite the move, some 250 Palestinians waving Palestinian flags and portraits of PNA President Yasser Arafat held a protest demonstration against the continuing curfew in the Israeli-ruled enclave and other army restrictions on the city.

The crowd approached the Israeli sector and threw stones and bottles at Israeli soldiers who responded by firing teargas, stun grenades and rubber-encased metal

bullets, witnesses said. During the confrontation, Israeli troops arrested Canadian and U.S. members of a Christian pacifist group who tried to break up clashes between Palestinian stonethrowers and soldiers, witnesses said.

Members of the Christian Peacemaker Team tried to halt the violence by standing between Palestinian protesters and Israeli soldiers who were firing rubber-coated metal bullets at the stonethrowers, the witnesses said.

Soldiers arrested two of the foreigners, identified by another group member as U.S. national Sarah Reschly

and Pierre Shamitz of Canada. "They were trying to get the soldiers to stop shooting and the Palestinians to stop throwing stones," a member of the group said.

There was no immediate comment by the Israeli army.

The Christian Peacemaker Team has for several years maintained between five and 10 members in Hebron to promote non-violence between Palestinians and some 400 militant Jewish settlers living in the centre of the city of 140,000.

The latest trouble began Jan. 4 when unidentified gunmen opened fire on a

van bringing settlers into the city, wounding two women. Israel says the attackers fled into the Palestinian-run sector of the city.

Tensions jumped further on Wednesday after Israeli soldiers killed a mentally-handicapped Palestinian man who approached an army patrol holding a toy gun.

Under peace accords between Israel and the PNA, the army withdrew from most of Hebron in January 1997 but remains in control of the final fifth of the city where the Jewish settlers live near the Tomb of the Patriarchs, a site holy to both Jews and Muslims.

Japanese FM vows more aid to PNA, presses Israel on pullbacks

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Kōmura offered the Palestinian National Authority another \$20 million in aid Sunday and vowed continued support until the Palestinians realise their "hopes and rights" for self-determination.

In a meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and a later speech to the Palestinian legislature, Kōmura also promised to press Israeli leaders to end their suspension of the recent Wye River peace accord, which requires further Israeli

pullbacks from the West Bank.

"In my meetings tomorrow, I will sincerely ask Israeli leaders to implement existing agreements," Kōmura told the Palestinian deputies of his planned talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai. "The Japanese government and people, standing on the people's side, will continue to provide our utmost moral and economic support to realise the hopes and rights of the Palestinian people," he said.

During Kōmura's meeting with Arafat, the Japanese and Palestinians signed an agreement providing for \$20 million in Japanese aid for infrastructure work at the new Gaza airport and other transit points into the Gaza Strip. Since the Palestinian National Authority was created in 1994 to govern autonomous zones in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, Japan has given \$400 million to the self-rule administration and Kōmura said it would give another \$200 million over the next two years.

Kōmura arrived in the West Bank earlier Sunday after visits to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan and oversaw the inauguration of a new hospital built with Japanese aid in the Palestinian enclave of Jericho.

While Kōmura spoke out strongly in favour of Palestinian "self-determination," he shied away from questions about whether Arafat should go ahead with his declared intention of unilaterally declaring independence if negotiations with Israel remain stalled.

Palestinians won't determine Israel's borders — Netanyahu accuses Egypt of 'meddling'

TEL AVIV (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took a hard-line Sunday on Palestinian statehood, telling his cabinet that the Palestinians will not be allowed to determine Israel's borders.

A senior Palestinian official, meanwhile, insisted Palestinians would achieve an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital — something Israel has vowed never to allow.

In recent months, Palestinian plans to declare statehood have been a major point of contention. The Palestinians have said they have the right to declare a state in May whether or not terms have been negotiated with Israel.

Israel has called that stance irresponsible and dangerous and demanded that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat stop talking about any unilateral statehood declaration.

Palestinians have recently toned down statehood talk, fearing that resulting Israeli security jitters would give a boost to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in May 17 elections.

Netanyahu reiterated his hard-line views at Sunday's cabinet meeting.

"We will not allow Arafat and the Palestinians to determine the borders of our state and the future of our capital," he told his ministers, according to a statement released afterward.

In the West Bank town of Ramallah, Palestinian Parliament Speaker Ahmad Qureia, also known as Abu Ala, blasted what he called Netanyahu's "arrogance and foolishness."

"We are ready and able to continue the struggle until our national rights are recognised — our independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as our capital," he told lawmakers.

During a cabinet meeting Sunday morning and in later remarks to journalists, Netanyahu said "certain circles in Egypt" were urging Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to hold off a planned declaration of statehood in hopes a more friendly government will emerge from the May 17 polls.

"These circles may hope for a change of government in Israel, on the assumption that Arafat will then be able to create a Palestinian state and divide Jerusalem without any serious Israeli opposition," Netanyahu told his ministers according to official minutes of the cabinet session.

In later remarks to journalists, Netanyahu accused Egypt of "meddling in Israel's domestic affairs," and said, "it is important for the Israeli public to be aware of these intentions."

Netanyahu reiterated that the current right-wing government under his leadership would respond severely if Arafat carried out his declared intention to declare a state with Arab east Jerusalem as its capital.

"Israel reserves the right to extend Israeli law to the territories under its control if Arafat and the Palestinians violate the agreements they have signed and unilaterally declare the establishment of a Palestinian state," he said.

Meanwhile, former Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Arafat had expressed willingness to put off plans to declare statehood if peace talks resume. Arafat aides refused to confirm or deny that.

Peres told Israel's Channel Two in an interview aired Sunday that Arafat told him that if peace talks were renewed between the sides, "there would be no need for unilateral declarations" of statehood.

One right-wing candidate for prime minister, lawmaker Uzi Landau, said Palestinians would defer declaring statehood in order to help leftist candidates in the election.

"It's a fact that if they delayed it, it would be in the interest of helping the [opposition] Labour party," Landau told army radio.

The increasingly bitter

statehood debate comes as the U.S.-brokered Wye River peace accords, signed in October, continue to founder. Israel called off a promised troop withdrawal last month, citing what it said were Palestinian violations of the accord. The Palestinians deny violating the agreement, and say they will not meet new terms set by Israel.

U.S. mediator Dennis Ross was due in the region on Monday to try to help get the accord back on track.

Although Israel's troop withdrawals from the West Bank have been put on hold, the director of Israel's finance ministry, Ben-Tsion Zilberfarb, travelled to Washington Sunday to request \$1.2 million in aid that the U.S. pledged to Israel to cover costs in the implementation of the peace accord, his office said.

Israel attacks infrastructure in Lebanon

RASHAYA (AFP) — Israeli artillery fire rocked several regions of Lebanon on Sunday, damaging infrastructure facilities as well as four houses and two cars, Lebanese police said.

Some 40 shells fell on the region, they said, cutting a major power line that supplies electricity to the eastern Bekaa valley as well as the majority of villages in the Israeli-occupied "security

zone" in southern Lebanon. There was no immediate word of any casualties.

Police said that in Zella, along the border of the eastern part of the zone, drinking-water pipelines were damaged along with three houses.

Further west the Israeli shelling damaged two cars in Nabatieh as well as a house in the town of Arabasim. Israel threatened to bom-

bard Lebanon's infrastructure in response to attacks by the Shiite Muslim Hizbollah militia on Israeli targets in the zone and northern Israel.

Lebanon on Saturday filed a complaint with the international committee monitoring a truce in southern Lebanon after an Israeli attack Friday damaged electrical cables near the Bisi Bridge outside of Sidon.

Iraq's parliament slams 'unfair' U.N. resolutions

BAGHDAD (AP) — After two days of bellicose threats, the Iraqi parliament on Sunday adopted a vaguely-worded statement on the latest spat with the United Nations.

Legislators in debate Saturday and earlier Sunday had called on the government to rescind its 1994 recognition of neighbouring Kuwait and to stop honouring all U.N. resolutions related to Iraq.

But the statement adopted by parliament merely called for further discussion of "unfair resolutions and measures which contravene international law and the U.N. charter."

It also urged that the Iraqi government "adopt necessary stands and measures" reflecting the will of the Iraqi people.

And it said Iraq "holds the Saudi and Kuwaiti regimes fully responsible for the U.S. and British aggression on Iraq" and reserves the right to seek compensation.

U.S. and British forces launched missile and rocket attacks on Iraq Dec. 16-19 to punish it for failing to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors. Most U.S. forces in the region are

aboard ships in the Gulf, but the United States also maintains bases in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Despite objections raised by several legislators that the statement did not spell out clearly what the members had demanded, Saddam Hummadi, speaker of the National Assembly, suspended discussions and called for a vote. The statement was passed by a majority.

Afterwards, legislators from the parliament — gave a variety of interpretations of what the statement actually meant. Hummadi declined to discuss it with reporters.

The statement passed Sunday was far different from a draft circulated on Saturday, which had called for reversing Iraq's recognition of Kuwait and urged the government to press ahead with its defiance of the U.S.-imposed "no-fly" zones.

Iraq recognised Kuwait's sovereignty and borders in November 1994 — after a standoff with U.S. forces — as had been mandated by a U.N. resolution.

The U.N. Security Council passed a series of resolutions concerning Iraq

Egypt urges Iraq to change attitude

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa Sunday called on Iraq to "change its tone" in dealing with Egypt and other Arab countries, in the latest round of a mounting war of words between Baghdad and Cairo.

"The Arabs must be as dear to the Iraqis as Iraq and the Iraqis are to the Arabs," he told journalists. "We call upon our brothers in Iraq to cooperate with their Arab brothers," he said.

His call for Iraq to change its attitude came after members of the Iraqi parliament meeting on Saturday blamed Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for December's four days of U.S.-British air strikes against Iraq.

Musa regretted the Iraqi parliament's decision describing it as the result of "anger and frustration." "In spite of that, we must all work to alleviate the sufferings of the Iraqi people," he said.

after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which sparked the 1991 Gulf war.

Iraq has been trying to get the international body to lift the trade sanctions, imposed in 1990, that severely restrict its sale of oil and other financial dealings.

The no-fly zones were imposed by the United States and its allies after the Gulf war to protect Iraqi Kurds and Shiite Muslims.

There have been at least four incidents in the zones involving U.S. and British patrol jets since the mid-

December bombings.

One legislator after another on Sunday urged the Iraqi leadership to end all cooperation with the United Nations and annul its recognition of Kuwait.

"I demand the annulment of all the related resolutions passed by the Security Council, including the recognition of Kuwait and its new borders," said Hayfa Mohammad.

Sunday's parliament statement made no mention of the U.N. Special Commission, which oversees the search for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

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Nigeria takes step towards democracy with state elections

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — After decades of military rule, Nigeria continued its tentative stride towards democracy with long lines of voters turning out to elect governors and state assemblies across the country.

Turnout appeared to be particularly high in the north and in Lagos, before voting ended in mid-afternoon. Results were expected later Sunday.

In a novel anti-fraud move, voters were allowed to stay at polling centres after they cast their ballots and watch votes being counted.

Military meddling and armed forces coups have long been part of Nigerian politics — the army has held power for all but 10 years since independence in 1960. But change has come to Africa's most populous nation since Gen. Sani Abacha's sudden death in June ended his brutal dictatorship.

Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar, the career soldier

who succeeded Abacha, has freed political prisoners, opened up the political process and repeatedly vowed to hand over power to civilians later this year. Nigeria, which became an international pariah under Abacha for its miserable human rights record, is again welcoming foreign envoys and wooing investors.

"We basically have one reason for voting, that is to get the military out of power," said Rahimi Sodunke, a Lagos businessman.

"We deserve a change in this country and we must shift power." Only three parties earned enough votes in local elections in December to qualify for the state polling, and for presidential voting next month.

The three parties are the Peoples' Democratic Party of former military ruler Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo; the All Peoples' Party, led by many supporters of late dictator

Abacha; and the Alliance for Democracy, mainly composed of opposition politicians from the Yoruba ethnic group from Nigeria's southwest.

Voting was held in 35 of Nigeria's 36 states. The elections did not take place in oil-rich Bayelsa state, which has been the scene of growing violence by members of the Ijaw tribe, who are demanding a bigger share of oil resources pumped from their poverty-stricken region.

Nigeria's electoral commission has said it would not conduct elections in that state because of fears of endangering its officials.

Despite the political shift since Abacha's death, Nigeria remains mired in poverty. The world's sixth-largest oil producer, the Nigerian economy has been crippled by years of mismanagement and corruption.

Cambodia hints at freedom for rights workers

PHNOM PENH (R) — Cambodia's Interior Ministry said Sunday it had asked a provincial court to speed up investigations into two detained human rights workers and to free them if there was no evidence.

"We don't want to keep them in jail," said interior ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak. "But it depends on the investigation of the investigating judge."

"This case has caused a lot of concern about human rights. We have proposed to the court to investigate this as soon as possible. If it is found they were not involved they will be released."

Kim Sen and Meas Minear of local rights group Licadho were arrested on Dec. 21 in the southern port of Sihanoukville during protests against toxic waste dumping by a

Taiwanese firm. They were charged with robbery and criminal damage but human rights groups said they were only carrying out their normal protest monitoring duties and called for their immediate and unconditional release.

The case has attracted international attention because of its sharp contrast with the friendly treatment the government accorded to Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea, two defecting leaders of the Khmer Rouge, whose revolution in the 1970s killed an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians.

In an extraordinary juxtaposition over New Year, while the rights workers sat jailed and denied bail in Sihanoukville, Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea visited the nearby beach and berated journalists for not allowing them to "rest".

The two Khmer Rouge

leader were allowed last week to return to the protection of an area controlled by their ex-comrades and the rights workers left to face up to six months in jail before being brought to trial and a sentence of up to 10 years if convicted on both charges.

Saturday, Thomas Hammarberg, the head of the United Nations human rights office in Cambodia, said he had not been convinced that there was any evidence against the workers.

He said the case "gives a very sad signal about the respect of the authorities towards human rights work."

The two men have been declared prisoners of conscience by the London-based human rights group Amnesty International.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N.'s Annan decries beating of Kenyan ecologist

UNITED NATIONS (R) — U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan protested Saturday against the beating of a Kenyan environmentalist who is a member of his advisory board on disarmament. He said in a statement that he expected Kenyan authorities to take "appropriate action" against those responsible for attacking Wangari Maathai, who was beaten and whipped by private security guards during a demonstration Friday against the sale of forest land near Nairobi, the capital. "The secretary-general has learned with concern that Professor Wangari Maathai, a member of his advisory board on disarmament matters and coordinator of the Green Belt Movement, was hospitalized after being the subject of violence," a statement from his office said. Three opposition members of parliament and two German environmentalists were also among those roughed up at the Karura forest site, north of Nairobi, when 70 guards moved in armed with machetes, clubs, whips, bows and arrows. The protesters say senior government officials have allowed the illegal seizure of 80 hectares of public land for private development. Annan, in his statement, wished Maathai a speedy recovery and said he had "no doubt that the Kenya authorities will take appropriate action against the perpetrators of this attack on a leading national and international figure in the disarmament and environmental field." Environmentalists and national newspapers have taken up the case, calling it an example of official corruption. Trouble flared after Maathai and two members of parliament led a group of activists in an attempt to plant a tree outside a fenced-off section of the forest. The security guards beat and stoned demonstrators and smashed the windows of cars belonging to protesters and journalists. Police declined to comment.

Church of England may loosen state ties

LONDON (UPI) — The Sunday Times of London is reporting that senior clerics in the Church of England have held a secret meeting with leaders of other Christian churches to discuss removing its ties to the British state. The meeting, first reported Sunday, was held with the Archbishop of Canterbury's support on Nov. 30. Removing the church's ties to the state could eventually involve dropping the British monarch as its supreme governor and forging closer ties with other Protestant denominations. The Church of England was formed in 1533, when King Henry VIII split with the Roman Catholic Church because it refused to annul his first marriage. Since then, the British monarch has been the church's supreme governor. The church's bishops also have seats in parliament's House of Lords. The church's official position still holds that it will not abandon its historic role, but until now discussion of disestablishment floated only on the fringes. Disestablishment may become more attractive for the church in the wake of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's rejection of the church's nominees for the bishopric of Liverpool and his plans to reform the House of Lords. Blair's reform plan for the House of Lords could cause many bishops to lose their seats. Some clerics fear the church's established status could be a sticking point in its efforts to build closer ties with other Protestant denominations, especially Methodists, who oppose the state's influence in the church's affairs.

No prosecutions over Diana's death, says paper

LONDON (R) — An official investigation into the Paris car crash which killed Britain's Princess Diana and her companion Dodi Al Fayed has concluded that no one left alive is to blame, the Sunday Mirror said. The investigation, led by French judge Hervé Stéphan, began soon after Diana's death in Sept. 1997 and was completed last week, the newspaper said. It said it had obtained key segments of the report despite the strict security that surrounded it. The Sunday Mirror said that according to those excerpts the only person who could have been held responsible — the car driver Henri Paul — was dead. "From the overall examination of the known factors the accident may be due to excess speed, the peculiar characteristics of the road, the presence of a Fiat Uno at the mouth of the tunnel and the poor control of the vehicle by the driver," the newspaper quoted the report as saying. The Paris investigators have consistently blamed the crash on the high speed at which Paul drove the car and the criminal level of alcohol in his blood at the time of the accident. The Sunday Mirror said manslaughter charges against photographers and a dispatch rider who pursued the car after it left the Ritz Hotel, owned by Dodi's father Mohamed Al Fayed, would be dropped. Photographers who were first to reach the crash scene would face only minor charges, the newspaper said, and the managers of the Ritz Hotel would not be tried for corporate manslaughter. The owners of the limousine hire company which provided the car would not face any charges for not providing a driver for the car when it was requested, the Sunday Mirror said. Only Diana's bodyguard, Trevor Rees-Jones, survived the crash but he suffered severe injuries.

Suharto's old party starts offensive for Indonesian elections

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia's ruling Golkar Party, for decades the main political vehicle of fallen president Suharto, has set up a 480-strong team to launch its bid to hang on to power in the June 7 elections. The team, selected for "loyalty and consistency" was installed by Golkar general chairman Akbar Tanjung at the party headquarters here Saturday in anticipation of a "strong challenge" in the polls, the state Antara News Agency said Sunday. "God willing Golkar will be able to win the hearts of the majority of the people and emerge victorious," Tanjung told the meeting of the central executive board. After winning every election in Indonesia since 1971, with massive backing from the military and the civil service, the 36-million-member Golkar has been trying since Suharto's fall in May to disassociate itself from the excesses of his rule. In its first post-Suharto congress in November, Golkar removed Suharto from its board of patrons and booted his children and closest allies out of positions on its board of directors. In June it will also face a far more open field, with some 15 out of the 120 parties that have mushroomed since May expected to qualify for the polls promised by Suharto's hand-picked successor, President B.J. Habibie. Among its strongest challengers currently appear to be the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI-Sungul) led by Megawati Sukarnoputri, the politician daughter of the country's first president Sukarno. Also high in opinion polls is the National Awakening Party (PAN) headed by Muslim intellectual Amien Rais. The June 7 polls will result in the election of a new parliament, or lower house and the formation of a new People's Consultative Assembly which will elect under Habibie's timetable select a new president before the end of 1999.

Landslides toll in Indonesia reaches 41

JAKARTA (AFP) — Landslides caused by heavy rains hit two more Indonesian towns Friday, killing seven people as the death toll in an earlier slide in the resort island of Bali rose to 34, reports and an official said Sunday.

In the West Java district of Garut, some 160 kilometres southeast of here, rescuers discovered six bodies trapped under the rubble from a rain-weakened cliff which toppled onto a main road late Friday, the Kompas daily said.

Two more people were believed to still be trapped, while three survivors were in critical condition, Kompas said. In East Java another slip in Jember, some 800 km

east of here, a woman was found dead after a mountain-side food stall was swept away. Four others were injured, Kompas added.

Meanwhile in Bali, rescue efforts to find the remaining six bodies believed buried under the mud of a massive slide Thursday, were interrupted by rains which threatened to bring down more landslides on scores of searchers, officials said.

But the rescuers, in Pupuan village in Tegallalang district, pulled out two more bodies early Sunday bringing the death toll to 34, a local duty police officer said.

"One man was found at 8:00 am (0100 GMT), and a woman was found at 10 am ... so the total number of

people found is now 34," Sergeant Major Wayan Lasto of Tegallalang office told AFP by phone.

He added that the rescue search for the remaining six more bodies believed to have been trapped under the landslide had again been temporarily halted due to the heavy rains.

"We cannot search for them because the rain is really heavy."

The Bali landslide occurred around 9:00 a.m. Thursday in the mountainous area of Tegallalang, 55 kilometres north of Denpasar, as villagers were working to clear an irrigation channel. Thursday police said they feared 50 had died in the slide.

Voice recorder from Thai crash 'inaudible'

BANGKOK (AFP) — The black box voice recorder pulled from the charred wreckage of a Thai Airways plane which crashed last month killing 101 people is barely audible, reports quoting accident investigators said Sunday.

Investigators into the crash on Dec. 11 now hope the black box data recorder is in better shape and can provide vital clues to the last moments of the doomed flight. Bangkok's Sunday Nation newspaper reported.

The two black boxes were taken to the United States for decoding after the crash of the A310-200 which plunged into a swamp in southern Surat Thani province as it tried

to land in a severe storm. "The voice box was opened with care, but it produced a barely audible recording," said Air Vice Marshall Tawal Mahadthai, of the directorate of air inspection.

A procedure to open and decode the data recorder was under way, he said.

The investigation is trying to find out if the disaster was caused by pilot error, inaccurate landing information supplied by the control tower, a sudden change in weather conditions or mechanical failure.

Some of the 45 people who survived the tragedy have criticised the pilot who died in the crash, for trying to land after aborting two previous

approaches because of poor visibility.

Since the crash, it has been disclosed that the Instrument Landing System (ILS) at Surat Thani was not functioning due to work on a runway.

However, airport officials said other navigational aids were sufficient and it was up to the pilot to decide whether conditions were safe enough to land.

Officials from Thailand's aviation department, the Royal Thai Air Force, Thai Airways International and Airbus Industrie joined the investigation in the United States.

Thailand's National Accident Investigation Committee has opened an inquiry into the crash.

1950s packaging shows changing consumer world

LONDON (R) — Stand beside the washing powder in a supermarket and you'd be forgiven for feeling baffled.

Is it powder, liquid or tablets you are after? What does your choice of brand say about you? Do you want your kids to have a gleaming white sports kit or are you someone who simply chucks in the laundry and forgets it?

If the decision seems hard today, imagine what British housewives felt 50 years ago when the drab era of World War II rationing ended and American-style self-service stores and commercial TV burst across the Atlantic.

A new book shows how consumer culture took off here in the 1950s with a cornucopia of brightly packaged convenience products — from automatic washing machines to Tupperware and filter-tipped cigarettes.

"Happy faces in the home. Why? Because it all seemed to be easy, bright and clean," says advertising and packaging historian Robert Opie in "The 1950s Scrapbook".

Everyday objects in the book project the security, certainty and promise of an era when prime minister Harold MacMillan could say in 1957: "Most of our people have never had it so good."

Many brands Opie shows are part of the 1950s consumer landscape even if their roles in people's lives have changed.

"Oxo" soup cubes, given to British soldiers in World War I trenches,

"Force", one of the first breakfast cereals to offer a promotional toy with its Sunny Jim ragdoll, even "Plasticine" modelling clay, are top names today.

But "Twink" home permanent hair-dos, "Gavtime" choc ices and "Hillman" cars have long since become museum pieces.

"I think we accept change much more readily than we ever used to. We accept the world we're in and don't think much about what happened before," says Opie, who covered the 1930s and 1940s in earlier titles which make brands a barometre of change.

"The idea is to give a spread on household products to give an insight into how all this has happened," Opie told Reuters.

"These brands have become so much part of our lives, they are almost becoming part of our family." Fridges were a luxury, owned by just 30 per cent of homes in the 1950s, so new supermarkets displayed dummy packs and moulded rubber meat. By contrast, goods in brightly designed tins and boxes leapt off the shelf, Opie recalled.

"The 50s stand for the galvanisation of the American style, a new wave of attack-

ing the market, the mass enforcement of "money off" promotional ideas, in-store promotions and the vibrancy of packaging," he said.

Opie enthuses about 1950s washing powder packs which combined art with function — Tide "with a swirly feeling which makes you feel it's going to work better" and Dreft "soft and bubbly suggesting it won't be harsh and abrasive".

Making packaging speak for a brand is a serious affair today for detergent maker Lever Brothers. The Unilever unit in 1996 reduced by a quarter the

number of packs it put onto supermarket shelves, where it calculated shoppers spent an average of 13 seconds choosing a brand like Persil.

"We looked at the value the consumer attached to what we were offering through the brand, whether functional or emotional, and how we were communicating that on the packaging," said corporate and consumer affairs director Jim Ballington.

"We found we tried to put too many messages across," he said. Lever elevated to pride of place on the back of its Persil boxes a "consumer careline" which offers

cleaning advice.

Virginia Valentine, who analyses the cultural significance of communications, says Britain has attached greater meaning and virtue to brands in recent decades as traditional organised value systems of family and religion have waned.

"Culture abhors a vacuum and brands have rushed in to fill it," said Valentine.

"Branding is not a post-war phenomenon. In a way there wasn't anything else. In those days brands were the signifier of a manufactured object. They were not the kind of icons of all our belief systems that they are now."

Persil today is the repository of all our cultural beliefs, not just about clothes and cleaning but the way we think about bringing up our children. There's an underlying notion — which brands have fostered — that if your kids don't have pristine clothes you'll be accused by social services."

Shifts in cultural assumptions can also be seen in attitudes to sweets, she observed. "When sweets came off ration I can remember the way the shops were cleared in two hours, absolutely emptied."

Britain ended wartime sugar restrictions in 1953.

But now "we don't think about chocolate as a reward, something you can only have after you've earned it. The whole chocolate thing — egregious nosing, as opposed to a guilty secret — shows we've come to the end of the austerity paradigm."



If choosing a washing machine powder seems difficult in today's supermarkets, imagine what British housewives felt 50 years ago when the drab era of World War II rationing ended and American-style self-service stores and commercial TV burst across the Atlantic. Photo taken Jan. 8, 1999, as HO/Pictures reproduced from "The 1950s Scrapbook" published by New Cavendish Books, London (Reuters)

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NATO marks 50th anniversary

BRUSSELS (AFP) — The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation begins to celebrate its 50th anniversary Monday, kicking off a series of events including a football match, a military fashion parade, and a summit of leaders of the member states.

The ceremonies will involve all of the countries in the alliance and most of the eastern and central European nations which are candidates to join or associated in the Partnership for Peace programme.

They will culminate in Washington on April 24 and 25, when heads of state and government gather in the same room where the North Atlantic Treaty was signed on April 4, 1949.

The aim of the alliance was to guard against a perceived threat from the Soviet Union and the other Communist-ruled countries under Moscow's domination.

That threat has now disappeared with the collapse of the Soviet system that began some ten years ago, and NATO is seeking a new role in international peace-keeping.

Monday NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene are to meet at a printing works in Belgium to see commemorative postage stamps roll off the presses.

Other events during the year will include the publication of books in Denmark, Greece, Italy, Hungary and Albania, a military fashion parade and a cycle rally in Bulgaria, a concert in Canada, a music festival in the Czech

Republic and the issue of commemorative telephone cards in Germany.

Greece also plans a film on its involvement in NATO. Britain and Poland will stage sports contests between soldiers and schoolchildren, while Denmark is to issue a special Trivial Pursuit-type general knowledge game on NATO.

In France, Luxembourg, Romania, Spain and Turkey conferences and lectures will be held, often with specific themes. Spain, for example, is to stage a debate in Valencia at the end of February on security in the Mediterranean, involving countries from the region.

Sofia will attend several of events during a planned tour of all member states during April for consultations ahead of the Washington summit.

April 4 this year is Easter Sunday, a religious holiday in much of Europe, so NATO headquarters in Belgium will stage a military parade on April 8, keeping it relatively low key so as not to overshadow the summit.

Another parade in Washington will precede the opening of the summit, which will see the admission of first three eastern European members, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

The summit, which on its second day will be expanded to include 28 associated states, including the "old enemy" Russia, is expected to confirm the trend towards a "European identity" for NATO, which is still largely dominated by the United States.



Malaysia's newly appointed deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi kisses his mother Kallan Hassan's hand for blessings at his home in Penang, his home state. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad named Abdullah as his new deputy, replacing former deputy Anwar Ibrahim who has been charged with corruption and sexual allegations (AFP photo)

Marshalls atoll considered, then rejected, for N-testing

MAJURO (AFP) — A northern Marshall Islands atoll was considered but later rejected as a third nuclear test site during the 1950s, according to a recently declassified U.S. government report.

Uninhabited Taongi, known by Marshall Islanders as "Bokak", was under consideration as an alternative to Eniwetok and Bikini atolls for the 1958 Hardtack nuclear test series, the final 32 U.S. tests in the Marshalls.

It is located nearly 800 kilometres north of here.

Taongi was in the spotlight in the late 1980s when researchers from the Hawaii-based East West Centre reported on its pristine and unusual marine habitat, with elevated reef structure found nowhere else in the Marshall Islands, and recommended it be placed on the World Heritage list.

At the same time an American company proposed using Taongi as a dump for municipal garbage shipped from the U.S. West Coast, a proposal that was later scrapped.

U.S. nuclear test planners in 1957 proposed that four of the biggest hydrogen bombs in the Hardtack

series be tested at Taongi, "in order to take advantage of presumably better firing weather there than at Bikini," according to the U.S. report, parts of which were deleted prior to its release here last week.

It is one of tens of thousands of documents that have been released over the last three years to the Marshall Islands by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Planning for the test series was complicated by the fact that U.S. planners were late in deciding about whether or not to use Taongi.

Washington decided on June 7, 1957, after months of consideration, that Taongi would not be used as a third test site.

The report showed that the use of two sites, with multiple monitoring capabilities at both test sites, allowed the operation to be "accomplished on a reasonable time scale."

U.S. test planners recommended that future series follow this two-atoll test pattern, "although substitution of Taongi for Bikini should prove to be extremely advantageous due to the more favourable

weather situation at Taongi."

Taongi is much smaller in land area and lagoon space than both Bikini and Eniwetok, which have huge enclosed lagoons of calm ocean area that provided anchorage for dozens of navy vessels used in monitoring the weapons tests.

In contrast, Taongi's lagoon is less than eight kilometres across at its widest point and less than 15 kilometres long.

The U.S. report includes numerous words, most apparently relating to the size of the nuclear tests, that are blacked out by a magic marker and also marked "deleted."

Other previously released U.S. documents provide the exact size of each of the 67 U.S. nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands.

The report noted that all tests in the Hardtack series at Eniwetok Atoll should be limited to a maximum of five megatonnes in size, but the Oak test on June 28, 1958, was recorded at 8.9 megatonnes.

Mahathir revamps cabinet, asserts control

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has moved swiftly to reassert control with a cabinet revamp which put loyalists in key posts and filled a political vacuum, politicians and diplomats said.

Mahathir, under pressure to name a deputy and relinquish the home ministry, named Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, 59, to both positions in a weekend reshuffle that caught the country by surprise.

The opposition had demanded that Mahathir give up the powerful home ministry, which controls the country's internal security apparatus, after an official finding implicated police in the beating of his detained former deputy Anwar Ibrahim.

A power gap also emerged in the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) after the September firing of Anwar, who headed a large faction in the party which dominates the ruling National Front coalition.

Party officials said UMNO members fell in line behind Mahathir's choice of deputy, easing worries over succession if something happens to him. Mahathir, 73, has been in power since 1981 and has had a heart bypass.

"He is responding to pressure within his own party, it seems," a Southeast Asian diplomat told AFP. "Having no deputy is not reassuring, whether internally or to the outside world."

Another Asian diplomat said the reshuffle was "a way of sharing around the responsibility and blame."

"It was well-coordinated, he defused the situation a little," he said, adding that "there is now a clear line of succession, the immediate issue has been addressed."

However, one Western diplomat described the reshuffle as "a sign of weakness."

"The fact that Mahathir gave up the home ministry was an implicit confession that he was responsible for Anwar's beating," he said. "He has just surrounded himself with yes-men."

Anwar, 51, was sacked after falling out of favour with Mahathir and arrested after leading massive protests. He was charged with corruption and sexual misconduct, which he dismisses as part of a political conspiracy.

Mahathir gave the finance ministry, also held by Anwar prior to his sacking, to a close friend and economic adviser, Daim Zainuddin, 60.

Another loyal Mahathir aide, Defence Minister Syed Hamid Albar, 55, was named foreign minister in place of Abdullah.

"I think PM has always shown wisdom in the decision-making process. He has always been able to look at scenarios and environments that are best for the country," Syed Hamid said.

He said Abdullah was "a most appropriate appoint-

ment under the current circumstances."

An opposition group, the People's Democratic Coalition or Gagasan, said Mahathir had produced "a new cabinet of cronies that has further eroded public and international confidence" in his leadership.

"Interestingly, Dr. Mahathir relinquished his post as home minister at a time when the ministry is under heavy attack from the public," chairman Tian Chua said, adding that Abdullah "will now be the apologist for Dr. Mahathir's incompetence."

Syed Husin Ali, president of the tiny opposition group Malaysian People's Party, said the reshuffle allowed Mahathir to retain control while deflecting criticism.

He said that "appearances may deceive, but in reality the PM will continue to dominate the cabinet and the country in his own authoritarian ways."

But not all opposition groups have written off Abdullah, who is known in Malaysia's rough political arena as a clean politician and a nice guy.

Lim Kiu Siang, secretary-general of the Democratic Action Party, urged Abdullah to get Mahathir's backing for the establishment of an independent commission to look into Anwar's maltreatment under police custody.

He also urged Abdullah to create a home ministry "with a human face."

Canadian executive hostage freed by leftist guerrillas

BOGOTA (AFP) — The chief executive of a Canadian company who offered himself in exchange for an employee abducted by Colombian rebels was freed Saturday after three months as a hostage, authorities reported here.

On Oct. 6 Norbert Reinhart, 49, president of Ontario-based Grey Star Resources, voluntarily took the place of his employee Ed Leonard — who Reinhart had never met — who had been abducted in late June by Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels while GreyStar and another outfit, Tenamundo Drilling, drilled for oil in the Bucaramanga region.

"I feel wonderful. I feel like I've been reborn," said Reinhart in Bucaramanga in a telephone interview with a Canadian reporter. He said his captors treated him respectfully.

As to his decision to exchange himself for his employee, Reinhart — a native of Raymond, Alberta — said: "I just tried to fulfil my responsibilities to my employees, that's all. It was just something that had to be done to lessen the tensions of the situation."

Reinhart said he spent most of three months in the Colombian jungle with FARC, the oldest and strongest guerrilla force in Colombia, perfecting his command of Spanish. He was surprised when one of his captors told him: "Let's go, you're going home today."

"We are happy that he is healthy and safe," said Andre Leblanc, a Canadian foreign ministry spokesman, adding that no Canadian hostages remained anywhere in the world.

Leblanc said the Canadian government and the embassy in Bogota were directly involved in the negotiations. "We worked with his family, the Colombian government and the Catholic Church," he said.

The ministry refused to reveal the conditions under which Reinhart was freed or comment on whether the 500,000-Canadian dollar (\$330,000) ransom demanded by the rebels was paid.

"The only thing I can say is that the negotiations were very long and complex. Normally in Colombia, it takes a year," Leblanc said.

Reinhart was handed over to the Red Cross while waiting for his return home to be arranged by authorities in the next few days.

Would-be hostage Leonard said the executive called him early Saturday with the news. "It was the best wake-up call I have ever had," he said.

Another hostage, the German physician Oumar Broda, 60, was also set free by rebels thanks to efforts by the German foreign ministry and the Roman Catholic bishop of Santo Domingo de los Colorados, Ecuador.

A spokesman for Broda's abductors from another rebel group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), said the physician was freed "in the context of an agreement we have with German citizens."

The government's anti-kidnapping "task" Jose Alfredo Escobar said seven other foreigners remain in the hands of rebel groups.

Meanwhile, Colombian government negotiators and FARC rebels were holding a first round of talks Saturday in the town of San Vicente del Caguan in a bid to end decades of violence.

Zinc important to brain function

LA JOLLA, Calif., (UPI) — Scientists have discovered why zinc is so important to proper brain function and why its deficiency appears linked to cognitive impairment.

The scientists report in *Nature Structural Biology* that zinc, long recognised as an essential trace element, is an integral part of structures called ion channels. These key "gatekeepers" regulate communication among nerve cells.

"We don't know yet what zinc is doing, but it is definitely a component in these essential structures," said senior study author Senyon Choe, assistant professor at The Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California.

"This finding was so surprising that at first we tried to disregard it, thinking it must be a contaminant, but, of course, as you try to disprove it, it keeps coming back."

The ion channels regulate how such ions as calcium and potassium flow into and out of cells. Their flux is critical to vital neuronal processes. As calcium streams into brain cells, it triggers changes that accompany learning.

Abnormalities in potassium channels have been found in some epileptics and in patients with insulin resistance and mobility disorders, said co-researcher Paul Pfaffinger of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Using X-ray crystallography, the team analysed the structures of four potassium channels from the sea slug *Aplysia*. These channels — Shaw, Shab, Shal and Shaker — represent the four

classes of potassium channels found in all higher organisms, including humans.

They found all but Shaker contained four zinc atoms in analogous positions, said co-researcher Henry Bellamy of the Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory in Palo Alto, Calif.

"Each channel resembles a funnel, and the zinc elements ring the end that empties into the cell's interior," Choe said.

While neuroscientists have long known that zinc binds to zinc stain brain cells in unique patterns, indicating that zinc should have a role in brain function, the nature of that role has remained unclear.

Other studies have shown zinc can enhance learning in undernourished children.

"Now we know zinc is embedded within structures that are absolutely critical for nerve cell activity," said Choe. "Furthermore, the amino acids that cradle the zinc atoms are completely conserved among the three classes of channels, telling us that during evolution there has been selective pressure to keep that zinc in place."

The studies of *Aplysia* have implications for the human brain because all four kinds of potassium channels analysed have analogs in the human nervous system, said first study author Kathryn Bixby, now at the University of California, San Diego.

The study was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the American Heart Association.

Don't make me a princess like Diana, says royal fiancée

LONDON (AFP) — Royal fiancée Sophie Rhys-Jones, who marries Prince Edward later this year, has told the queen she does not want to be a princess because of comparisons with Diana.

According to Sunday's British press, Rhys-Jones resents media comparisons of her strong resemblance to the late princess and wants to be recognised in her own right.

The Telegraph said she had told Queen Elizabeth she did not want to become a princess when she marries the monarch's youngest son.

Nor does she want to be known as Her Royal Highness The Princess Edward, which would be her official title, believing it is old-fashioned to be known by her husband's name.

The solution would be for the queen to make Edward a duke — royal experts say the Dukedom of Cambridge is the most likely.

Edward, 34, and Rhys-Jones, 33, announced their engagement

Wednesday after five years of dating.

They did not set a date or venue for the wedding, but it is expected to be held at St. George's Chapel in Windsor, west of London, by summer.

Since the engagement, she has been compared incessantly to Diana in press accounts here, complete with photographs of the two women in similar clothes and poses.

Rhys-Jones' ready smile, blonde hair and blue eyes strongly recall Diana, the late ex-wife of Edward's older brother Charles.

However their personalities are completely different. Rhys-Jones has been praised for her level-headedness, apparent lack of vanity and willingness to bow to royal protocol.

Diana died in a car crash in Paris early on Aug. 31, 1997.

It has become customary for the monarch to give his or her younger sons a dukedom, either on coming of age or marriage. Prince Andrew was made Duke of York on

the eve of his marriage to Sarah Ferguson in 1986.

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BRITISH SCIENTISTS say they were home make cancer cells. Breast cancer ce come that carries the scientists report. National Cancer Institute. Although the experimental therapy, known as telomerase, said Robert University in Utah the study. Telomerase has been cancer research.

Anchoring the Madaba Plains Project, Tell el-'Umayri includes substantial remains of several Iron Age fortified towns — part II

(Note: This is the second of three articles on the excavations at Tell el-'Umayri and associated surveys and smaller excavations within the context of the Madaba Plains Project. This article concentrates on the important Iron Age towns at the site; the first article focused on the earliest Bronze Age towns; the third article looks at the Classical period and later sites, and the results of regional surveys and excavations.)

AS IF ITS three different Bronze Age settlements were not enough to put Tell el-'Umayri on the world archaeological map, the site also contains what may be Jordan and Palestine's best preserved urban remains from the Iron Age I (1200-900 BC).

The walls of several houses excavated in the past 14 years still stand two metres high; pillar bases supported wooden posts that held up the house roofs, while the floor was partially paved and surfaced with beaten earth. Other parts were paved with flagstones. The floor plan of these buildings mirrors the well-documented "four-room houses" from Iron I Palestine hill settlements.

A household cultic centre comprised a standing stone on pavement, some sort of altar, and post bases to support a curtain wall between the cultic installation and a domestic room. Inside that room were a storage bin, a cooking hearth, a grinding stone and mortar, and a small bench.

The Iron Age I town (from the time of the biblical Judges, around 1200-1000 BC) was re-fortified and protected by a thick town wall standing over four metres high, some of whose stones measured a metre wide and two metres long. The Iron Age I fortifications basically built upon and expanded the previous defences from the Middle and Late Bronze Age towns. Over 35 metres of the Iron Age I wall have been exposed.

At the top of the fortifications was a double ("proto") casemate wall that may have surrounded the entire city. Below it, successively, were a steep rampart made of beaten earth, a lower second wall (a "retaining wall") around the base of the site, and the dry moat measuring five metres deep and eight metres wide. These elements can be seen clearly in the major excavation on the west side of the tell.

This is thought to be the only defensive system so far excavated from an Iron Age town in Jordan/Palestine that retains all these features. The rooms inside the casemate wall were used for storage purposes, as evidenced by scores of collared pithoi storage jars with the remains of grains, lentils, seeds, chick peas, and other dry goods foodstuffs. The rooms that formed the casemate wall actually formed parts of houses that were located around the periphery of the site. Also excavated within the casemate wall rooms were military hardware and the fractured, burned bones of at least two individuals who probably died defending their town.

The location of the town gate(s) in the walls remains a puzzle that will only be solved with further excavations.

Who lived here?

One of the most fascinating aspects of the 'Umayri project is the identity of the peoples who built and destroyed the first towns at the site. The cultural finds suggest that the inhabitants of the 12th century BC town were relatively "simple people with a limited repertoire of pottery and objects, perhaps reflecting the settlement of local tribal and nomadic groups, much as the bedouins have been doing in modern Jordan in the past half a century," according to Dr. Larry Herr of Canadian University College and a co-director of the 'Umayri project.

One theory being assessed is that these Iron Age I inhabitants of Tell el-'Umayri town became the people we know today as the Ammonites, the ancient group that gave their name to modern Amman. Other tribal groups of

the area, and known from the Bible and other ancient sources, may also be good candidates for the inhabitants of the town. Members of the biblical tribes of Reuben or Gad may have been associated with this and other sites in this region dating from the Late Bronze-Early Iron transition period, around 1250 BC.

Or, Amorites, connected with the Kingdom of King Sihon may have been the first town dwellers here. Dr. Herr said, adding that the walled town could have been destroyed in the early 12th century BC by Ammonites, Israelites, Midianites, or even Egyptians.

It is now well documented that the Iron Age I town was destroyed around 1150 BC or somewhat earlier by a violent conflagration that left behind debris of burned bricks and roofing materials such as wooden beams and reeds. One room was filled with almost two metres of pure ash. The remains of huge amounts of stored foodstuffs amidst the collapsed roof debris suggest that food was stored on or in the roofing system. The presence of so much stored food also may mean that the town was not destroyed after a long siege, but rather suddenly and very violently. A military attack seems to be the most likely cause of the destruction, to judge by the many bronze weapons found in the debris.

In the century after this destruction, the site again supported a relatively small settlement. Excavated houses from around 1000 BC had 18 large jars that included grape and olive seeds, but the extent of that settlement has not yet been determined. The team excavating the site is exploring the hypothesis that after the violent destruction of their walled town in the early 12th century BC, the surviving inhabitants or their descendants moved three kilometres to the east, where they established a walled town on the more easily defensible site now known as Tell Jawa (just north-east of Yaddouh/Kan Zaman).

Suggested identification

Some scholars tend to identify the Iron Age I town at Tell el-'Umayri with the Old Testament biblical town of Abel-keramim, mentioned in Judges 11:33.

This town is also mentioned in a list of cities subdued by the Egyptian Pharaoh Thutmose III (1504-1450 BC). In 1987 the excavators found (on a jar handle) a scarab-seal impression with an upright cartouche containing Thutmose's name (though the seal impression probably dated from the time of Ramses IV around the middle of the 12th century BC). The cartouche is flanked by a

winged uraeus and the words "the God God, the Lord of the Two Lands."

(Abel-keramim, also called Abel-cheramim ["district/plain of the vineyards"], was the place where the Bible says that Jephthah the Gileadite defeated the Ammonites in battle [Judges 11:33]. Jephthah was a mighty warrior who may have lived in the Jordan Valley, possibly at the site of Zaphon [associated today with Tell el-Qos or Tell es-Sa'adiyah, in the central Jordan River Valley]. Some biblical translations say Jephthah was buried "in his city, Zaphon," "in his city in Gilead," or "among the cities of Gilead." Jephthah the Gileadite fled to Tob when his half-brothers refused him an inheritance because his mother was a prostitute, and the Ammonites hired soldiers from Tob to fight against David [Judges 11:1-5; 2 Samuel 10:6-8]. Tob [or, the Land of Tob] comprises a town and its area east of the Jordan River, between Gilead and the eastern desert. In Tob Jephthah was joined by "worthless fellows" and brigands who "went raiding with him"; but when the Ammonites and Israelites were at war in the mid-11th century BC, the elders of Gilead asked him to be their leader, and he became a major judge of the people of Israel. To keep a vow he had made to God in return for God's granting him victory in battle over the Ammonites, Jephthah had to sacrifice his daughter and only child upon returning home to Mizpah.)

Dr. Randall Younker of Andrews University has suggested that Abel-keramim might be better identified with nearby Tell Jawa, based on topographic and climatic evidence combined with information from the 4th century AD historian Eusebius and the mid-1st Millennium BC itinerary of the Egyptian leader Thutmose III. Wadi Henu north

of Jawa is well suited for a wine industry, as evidenced by the large number of winepresses the team found in that area. He believes that a major ancient road ran into Ammon, past Jawa, just as it does today, rather than following the route of the airport highway near 'Umayri.

During the second half of the Iron Age (around 900-550 BC), the Ammon region usually found itself living under Assyrian tutelage, a period of Pax Assyriaca that brought with it stability for many centuries. This allowed people to expand beyond their large fortified towns and to move out and live in numerous rural villages and large farmsteads.

The Transjordanian provinces that included Ammon appear to have flourished under Assyrian rule, and also under the succeeding Babylonian rule starting in the early 6th century BC. The Ammonite inhabitants of the 'Umayri region enjoyed an affluent lifestyle based on agriculture and trade well into the 5th century BC, the excavations reveal. The most substantial evidence for the continuity of the Ammonites at this town into the Babylonian and Persian periods comes from the excavated Late Iron Age administrative complex towards the south-west side of the summit.

Dr. Herr explained that "the Ammonites apparently controlled the city at Tell el-'Umayri in the later Iron Age, making it an administrative centre near their southern border with the Moabites."

Seals and impressions

Ten new seals and seal impressions were discovered in this year's dig (1998), mostly associated with bureaucratic activities at the late Iron Age administrative complex. No other Iron Age site in Jordan or Palestine has approached the more than 80 seals and seal impressions discovered to date at Tell el-'Umayri.

One seal impression found in 1984 mentions a prominent official of the Ammonite government who served King Baalis in the time of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 40:14). Dated from the early 6th century BC, it reads: "belonging to Milkoni'ur, servant of Baalyasha." The name

Baalyasha ("Ba'al saves") is the Ammonite spelling of the biblical King Baalis. This is another interesting piece of material evidence that can be compared with the biblical text.

When the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah in 588 BC, the Bible reports, some Jews fled for safety to Ammon and the other Transjordanian kingdoms of Moab and Edom to the south. According to Jeremiah 40:11, "...when all the Jews who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom and in other lands heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor of Judah they all returned to Judah. Around 582 BC, the Ammonite King Baalis ordered Ishmael, a renegade prince of Judah, to assassinate Gedaliah, after which Ishmael fled to Ammon to escape from Johanan who had gone to kill him (Jeremiah 40:14-15; 41:12-15).

The official who made the seal impression "belonging to Milkoni'ur, servant of Baalyasha" probably worked in an administrative centre within the walled town — most likely the complex that has been identified and excavated along the west side of the summit. This large complex dating from about 550 BC was built of massive stone walls measuring over a metre thick and resting on deep foundations — a typical ancient Ammonite monarchy architecture.

Ancient Heritage

A Jordan Times Series



By Rami G. Khouri

Babylon or other destinations. This hypothesis, if correct, would explain why so many wine-making farmsteads were suddenly built during one period, all in a monumental architectural style that probably reflected Ammonite royal patronage under Babylonian imperial tutelage or vassalage.

The available evidence to date suggests that the buildings of the Iron II administrative complex were built around 580-560 BC, and were used well into the Persian period (539-332 BC). Among the important findings were Aramaic seal impressions with the names of an official ("Shuha") and the name of the province of Ammon — the first material proof for the existence of a Persian province of Ammon. Shuha was probably a governor or treasurer of the Persian province of Ammon, Dr. Herr says.

Other, earlier, seal impressions from



A general view of the excavation of the Bronze and Iron Age settlements at Tell el-'Umayri (Photo by Rami G. Khouri)

tural style. The complex' largest room had three levels of plastered floors, and may have served as an open courtyard. Its public (rather than private domestic) purpose is also suggested by the fact that no domestic objects were found on its floors, and very fine quality pottery was found on and just above the floors.

These excavated remains are from basements which supported the government buildings above.

"This complex probably administered large groups of rural farmers in the hills around Tell el-'Umayri who produced wine as tribute to their Babylonian overlords during the 6th century BC, in the late Iron Age and Persian period," Dr. Herr suggested. His hypothesis is that "after the murder of Gedaliah in 582 BC, the Babylonians took revenge on Ammon for its complicity. The Jewish Roman-era historian Josephus records a Babylonian invasion of Ammon at this time. The 'Umayri administrative complex was then built by the Ammonite monarchy to administer government-sponsored grape plantations at the farmsteads to produce wine for tribute or to pay for other forms of tribute to Babylon, after the Babylonians defeated Ammon in 582 BC."

The administrative centre at 'Umayri oversaw the production, collection, bulking and shipment of the wine. The many royal administrative seals found in the region were used to record bureaucratic proceedings such as sales, storage or shipment of the wine to

the 7th-6th centuries BC had inscriptions such as "belonging to Shema", "belonging to 'El'amass son of Tamak'el," and "belonging to Nasar'il son of 'Ilmashal."

Dr. Herr says the evidence from Tell el-'Umayri now indicates that "the Ammonites did not disappear with the Babylonian invasion, but instead flourished into the Persian period, perhaps as late as the Fourth century BC."

A fragmentary but unique find in Jordan from the Iron II administrative complex at Tell el-'Umayri were small pieces of a ceramic life-sized statue, with dramatic bits of a painted eye, an ear, a chin with a thin mouth, parts of arms, two heels, and chest and shoulder fragments. They were excavated from ancient debris that was moved from other parts of the site. The original configuration of the statue remains unclear.

Other buildings excavated in this south-western corner of the summit included a small farmstead from the Persian and Hellenistic periods, a two-metre-high, plastered Roman era ritual bath from the 1st century AD, and a 6th century AD Byzantine farm. The region around 'Umayri was intensively settled during the Byzantine period (c. 330-640 AD), and remained in use, though with less density of human settlements, during the entire Islamic era.

Large towns once again flourished in the region during the Ayyubid-Mamluk era (1174-1516 AD), though not at this site.

Scientists claim to be homing in on a cancer-killing gene

By Maggie Fox
Reuters

BRITISH SCIENTISTS said last Wednesday they were homing in on a gene that can make cancer cells naturally self-destruct. Breast cancer cells exposed to a chromosome that carries the gene nearly all died, the scientists reported in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

Although the experiment does not offer a cure or therapy, it does show that gene therapy or drugs that target an enzyme known as telomerase might work against cancer, said Robert Newbold of Brunel University in Uxbridge, who helped lead the study.

Telomerase has become a recent target of cancer researchers because it seems to confer immortality on cells. Newbold says his

group's findings show that such researchers are on the right track.

Chromosomes carry the genes, and at the end of each chromosome is a section called the telomere. Each time a cell divides, the telomere gets more and more ragged. This contributes to the genetic damage that in turn causes cells to age and die.

In a foetus, which naturally has many dividing cells, cells produce an enzyme known as telomerase, which helps repair these telomeres. But telomerase is no longer produced in a fully developed animal.

However, recent studies have found that most cancer cells produce telomerase, which helps them continue their out-of-control division that produces a tumour.

"Cancer cells are immortal," Newbold said. "It is one of the fundamental differ-

ences between cancer cells and normal cells." Newbold and colleagues tested a lab dish full of breast cancer cells. They shot these cells full of human chromosomes — notably those known as 3, 8, 12 and 20 — from normal cells.

Most had no effect. But the cancer cells treated with chromosome 3 nearly all stopped dividing.

Newbold said the implication was clear. "The gene on chromosome 3 is the natural regulator of telomerase which shuts it down in our normal cells at about 20 weeks of foetal development," he said. "Eighty-five to 90 percent of cancers have high levels of this enzyme." So if there is a way to shut down the enzyme, it could be a good

way to battle most cancers. There is no known way to treat a person using entire chromosomes, but Newbold's team hopes to identify the actual gene later this year. They would then use gene therapy against the cancer — introducing the gene into the body, perhaps using a virus to carry it.

Another approach would be what some drug companies are already working on —

designing a drug that inhibits telomerase.

Newbold is aware that no gene therapy efforts have been completely successful, except for early experiments to grow new blood vessels in heart patients.

"We do have a long way to go," he said. "Cancer is extremely complex." But once discoveries in test tubes are developed into true therapies, progress will be quick, Newbold predicted.

"The public are getting a little bit impatient — they are seeing all these discoveries coming out and no major benefits at the bedside. But we have got to be patient. It's not like attacking bacteria. These are our own cells that have gone awry."



New business body chief warns on protectionism

GENEVA (R) — The new President of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the world's top business grouping, has warned that protectionism is one of the biggest dangers to the world economy in 1999.

In a message on taking over the post, Lebanese banker Adnan Kassas also urged governments to resist pressures to close national markets to foreign goods and services.

"The lesson of history is that such tendencies must not only be resisted but that, when they appear, governments should strive with renewed vigour to open markets and further strengthen the rules-based multilateral trading system," he said.

The message from Kassas, whose grouping is based in Paris, was distributed in Geneva where the World Trade Organisation which administers global trading rules has its headquarters.

Kassas, chairman and

chief executive officer of the Fransbank Group, said liberalisation of trade and investment was "the surest way to secure economic growth, more jobs and prosperity for all nations. Further progress in opening up markets around the globe would help boost business confidence," he declared.

"Such a policy will go a long way towards restoring growth and stability."

Kassas, also chairman of the General Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture for the Arab countries, said a main objective of his two-year tenure would be to use ICC influence to ensure developing countries were not left on the margins of the global economy.

Kassas took over on Jan. 1 as head of the ICC, which has over 7,000 member companies and business associations in 13 countries, from Helmut Maucher, chairman of the Swiss Nestle SA.

Israel, India trade seen over \$1.0 billion in 2000

JAIPUR, India (R) — Bilateral trade between India and Israel is expected to top \$1.0 billion in 2000, a senior Israeli diplomat has said.

"We will achieve our target of crossing a billion dollars of bilateral trade by 2000," Amiram Halevy, counsellor for economic affairs at the embassy of Israel in India told a news conference at an international business summit in this northwestern city.

He said trade between the two nations had reached \$700 million in 1998, from a start of \$200 million in 1992, when India and Israel established diplomatic relations.

Halevy said that 1998 was the first year in which the balance of trade between both countries had become almost equal.

"In the years before 1998, the balance of trade was always in favour of Israel,"

he said.

Over 50 per cent of all trade between India and Israel is made up of diamonds. Halevy said Israel shipped uncut diamonds to India for cutting and polishing, and India shipped finished diamonds to Israel.

He said the trend in trade was starting to change towards other products.

"High technology and electronic products have grown sharply to make up 17 per cent of trade in 1998 from seven per cent in 1997. There is growth in chemicals and agricultural inputs also," he added.

He indicated that there was tremendous scope for Indo-Israeli trade in hiotechnology, agricultural products and technology, medicine, and information technology and telecommunications.

Uzi Wellish, counsellor, agricultural affairs at the Israeli embassy, said that

his country was keen to develop agriculture projects, rural development programmes, and arid land and irrigation ventures in India.

"India and Israel are close to finalising two agreements. One is between the government of the state of Punjab and the Dairy Board of Israel to establish a Punjab Dairy Board on the Israeli pattern," he said.

He added that the other agreement close to fruition was between the National Institute of Rural Development in Hyderabad and Israel's Development and Study Centre for an integrated rural planning development concept.

Wellish said Israel was also involved in tailor-made agricultural programmes to promote cooperative and collective farming on the lines of kibbutzim, drip irrigation and greenhouse technology.

Philippine leader says 1999 a critical year for economy

MANILA (AFP) — Philippine President Joseph Estrada has said 1999 would be a critical year for the local economy. Despite modest accomplishments last year,

"This year will even be a more critical year for the economy. It will be a decisive and crucial year in our capacity to overcome the impact of the regional crisis," Estrada in his report to the nation.

"We have to meet a GNP (gross national product) target of at least three per cent. If we

reach that we will be full steam ahead."

The Philippines became the eighth recession casualty in Asia in November when its gross domestic product (GDP) contracted 0.1 per cent in the three months to September.

Two or more successive contractions in GDP technically means a recession, but Philippine economic managers had argued there was no recession as the country uses GNP as a yardstick of economic growth.

Exchange Rates Sunday, 10-01-99

JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.6780	1.8389	0.1945	2.3478	0.2077	0.7080
BAHAI RYAL	5.2073	1.0000	1.0210	9.8463	8.7413	1.0301	12.4374	1.1003	3.7502
HALE DINAHM	5.1681	0.9794	1.0000	9.7432	8.5405	1.0088	12.1811	1.0775	3.6752
SAHARA DINAR	0.5325	0.1005	0.1028	1.0000	0.8792	0.1035	1.2602	0.1105	0.3770
OMAN RYAL	0.5438	0.1027	0.1049	1.0000	0.8792	0.1035	1.2768	0.1129	0.3650
QATAR RYAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9912	9.8578	8.4568	1.0000	12.0743	1.0881	3.5410
RUHAYT DINAR	0.4259	0.0804	0.0821	0.7989	0.7832	0.0828	1.0000	0.0885	0.3016
EGYPT POUND	4.5145	0.9059	0.9280	9.0416	8.8335	0.9362	11.3039	1.0000	3.4087
LIBYAN DINA	21.4537	4.0555	4.1408	40.3448	38.5035	4.1774	50.4384	4.4621	15.2100
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2686	0.2722	2.8525	2.5973	0.2746	3.3182	0.2834	1.0000
GERMAN MARK	0.8902	0.1624	0.1658	1.6154	1.5816	0.1673	2.0196	0.1787	0.5950
FRANCE FRANC	2.3835	0.4489	0.4594	4.4791	4.3630	0.4535	5.6261	0.4951	1.6375
NETHERLAND GULDER	1.9710	0.3721	0.3799	3.7016	3.6246	0.3693	4.6278	0.4804	1.5955
SWITZERLAND FRANC	7.3938	1.3690	1.4000	14.0122	14.0999	1.4154	17.6874	1.8603	5.5568
JAPAN YEN	1.5889	0.2952	0.3024	2.9464	2.8851	0.3051	3.6836	0.3259	1.1106
ITALY LIRA	2.8855	0.5089	0.5178	5.0432	4.9383	0.5222	6.3051	0.5578	1.9013
SPAIN PESA	11.1897	2.1123	2.1588	21.0141	20.5789	2.1789	26.2719	2.3241	7.9223
PORTUGAL ESCUDO	23.5895	4.4544	4.5462	44.3140	43.3921	4.5884	55.4017	4.9011	16.7084
FINLAND MARKKA	49.9082	9.2326	9.4289	91.8488	89.6379	9.3252	114.8300	10.1584	34.8270
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2343	0.4189	0.4287	4.1772	4.0533	0.4226	5.2224	0.4820	1.5428
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	3.2510	0.7458	0.7613	7.1789	7.2855	0.7683	9.2764	0.8206	2.7973
CYPRUS POUND	2.8836	0.5086	0.5173	5.0386	4.9349	0.5218	6.3008	0.5574	1.8999
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	15.6780	3.1484	3.2146	31.3210	30.6993	3.2491	39.1577	3.4541	11.8080
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1378	0.4035	0.4120	4.0143	3.9308	0.4137	5.0187	0.4440	1.5134
EURO	1.2187	0.2301	0.2349	2.2836	2.2410	0.2370	2.9613	0.2531	0.8628

CURRENCY	UNIT	1 JORDAN DINAR	UNIT	1 JORDAN DINAR	UNIT	1 JORDAN DINAR	UNIT	1 JORDAN DINAR
US DOLLAR	1.0000	0.5826	0.7185	0.1787	0.9003	0.5295	5.9557	1.1980
EURO	0.8900	0.5826	0.7185	0.1787	0.9003	0.5295	5.9557	1.1980
BRITISH POUND	1.0000	0.5826	0.7185	0.1787	0.9003	0.5295	5.9557	1.1980
FRANCE FRANC	1.0000	0.5826	0.7185	0.1787	0.9003	0.5295	5.9557	1.1980
NETHERLAND GULDER	1.0000	0.5826	0.7185	0.1787	0.9003	0.5295	5.9557	1.1980
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CANADA DOLLAR	1.0000	0.5826	0.7185	0.1787	0.9003	0.5295	5.9557	1.1980
EURO	1.0000	0.5826	0.7185	0.1787	0.9003	0.5295	5.9557	1.1980

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THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Luster
- Zhivago's love
- Winter vehicle
- Telephone call?
- Asian sea
- Guided trip
- White heron
- Shrub-nosed dogs
- Distinctive air
- New Jersey town
- Bikini top
- Civil unrest
- Allen craft
- Whitney's invention
- Hair-styling product
- Actress Lupino
- Macbeth's
- Lon of Cambodia
- Truth twisters
- High-wire family act
- Daddy
- Brief life story
- Former
- Speaker of the House Gingrich
- Intoxication citation: abbr.
- Churchill's gesture
- French friend
- Wright brothers' project
- Wire spiral
- HST's predecessor
- More organized
- Space
- Feudal land
- "Kiss of the Spider Woman" star Sonie
- Swiss capital
- Mr. Knives
- Very top grade
- Medicine
- Singer Home
- Gander's mate

DOWN

- Storage space
- "Science of Logic" author
- "Crazy Legs" Hirsch
- Gage book
- Writing down
- Kiddle seat?
- Island in the Antilles
- Homemade carpet
- Strasbourg's region
- Ringo or Bart
- Archipelago off New Guinea
- Continental
- Prefix
- Mild oath
- Wine process
- Winter fall
- Fashion magazine
- Tie
- Helper: abbr.
- Nob. Hill cops: abbr.
- Come to a stop
- Symbolizers
- Liquid taste
- Sq. glass
- Rustic hotel
- Dark blue
- Actor Neeson
- Willy of "Death of a Salesman"
- French tower
- Salted veggie
- Cold neck
- Grassy plain
- Putting surface
- Marx brother
- Writer Calvino
- Hot wine drink
- Expunge
- Taxis
- Sandwich cookie
- Sleason U's state

Peanuts

YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND... I'M NOT COMPLAINING... I UNDERSTAND... I SIMPLY LEARNED THAT WE SHOULDN'T ALWAYS EXPECT TO GET EVERYTHING WE ASK FOR... THAT'S CALLED "PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED"

Andy Capp

WELL, THAT'S IT. I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT IF YOU WANT TO GET ANYWHERE, YOU HAVE TO BE A BIT OF A CREEPY. I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT IF YOU WANT TO GET ANYWHERE, YOU HAVE TO BE A BIT OF A CREEPY. I'VE BEEN TOLD THAT IF YOU WANT TO GET ANYWHERE, YOU HAVE TO BE A BIT OF A CREEPY.

Mutt'n'Jeff

YEH, THE NEW BARBER SHOP IS OPEN BUT I DON'T SEE WHY THAT SHOULD INTEREST YOU. GIMME A HAIRCUT! REMOVE YOUR HAIR! YESSIR! WILL YOU KINDLY REMOVE YOUR HAIR? WHY? ARE THERE LADIES PRESENT? NO SIR! I WANT TO CUT YOUR HAIR! WELL, GO AHEAD AND CUT IT!

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen

"I'm not a health nut like you are, so stop hiding peas and corn in my cereal!"

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Arington

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

OPTIV
YUCIJ
NINTE
BLITAR

Yesterday's Jumbles: ABBOT CHANT BLUING TALLOW
Answer: What skydivers like to do on weekends
HANG OUT

Busir

A re

Jordi

JD3

Industrialist

HOR

FORECAST FOR J.

By Linda C. Black

ARIES: ...

CANCER: ...

LIBRA: ...

SCORPIO: ...

SAGITTARIUS: ...

AQUARIUS: ...

PISCES: ...

Birthstone of J:

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordinvest to arrange, underwrite JD3.5m convertible bond issue

JORDAN INVESTMENT Trust (Jordinvest) will arrange and underwrite a convertible bond issue for JD3.5 million to the Union Chemical and Vegetable Oil Industries under an agreement signed between the two sides last week. The agreement was signed by Mohammad Said Nabulsi, chairman and chief executive officer on behalf of Jordinvest and Rajai Al Salfiti, chairman of the board, and Mohammad Kamel Abu Arida, member of the board of directors on behalf of Union Chemical and Vegetable Oil Industries (UCVOI). Union Chemical will use the proceeds of the bond mainly to expand its sunflower seeds and soy beans oils facilities, raise its capital, and retire short-term debts.

According to the agreement, Jordinvest undertakes to carry out studies, arrangements and procedures necessary for the bond issue expected to be completed by the end of January 1999. The bonds will be issued in early February having had the approval of Jordan Securities Commission. The bonds at nominal value of JD10,000 each, will mature after five years from the date of issue at an interest rate of 9.5 per cent annually payable every six months. The bonds can be converted to UCVOI's shares, at the rate JD1.3 each, after three years from the date of issue.

Industrialist outlines impediments to marketing

THE HIGH cost of advertisements, the low income level in the Kingdom and the lack of trust in local products and the preference of consumers to buy foreign products are the most important barriers for marketing in the local market, said Basel Sadeq, the commercial manager of the Gulf Foodstuffs Company. He noted that the local and international markets are in recession but he said the government can ease the effect of recession by limiting the import of foreign-made products that are similar to ones produced in Jordan.

Sadeq indicated that the high fuel prices and other production costs as well as shipping rates push up the prices of final products and, accordingly, that impedes the penetration of Jordanian products into international markets and weakens the capabilities for competition. He stressed that some trade protocols must be reconsidered and others must be activated in addition to the importance of reciprocal treatment by neighbouring countries and markets.

A.F.M. TRADE Sunday, 10-01-99 ACCESS 4646868

Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	217.000	218.000	+0.46%
NTL BK	1.540	1.550	+1.30%
BK OF JO	1.250	1.230	-1.60%
THE HOUSING BK	2.840	2.800	-1.41%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.650	1.650	0.00%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.680	1.680	0.00%
UNION BK	1.180	1.100	-5.17%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.560	0.550	-1.79%
BANKS INDEX	284.990		+0.20%
INSURANCE			
JO. FRENCH INS	2.700	2.700	0.00%
PHILADELPHIA INS	2.100	2.000	-4.76%
AHLIA INS	1.060	1.110	+4.72%
INSURANCE INDEX	126.090		-0.22%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.780	1.750	-0.57%
IRBID ELECTRICITY	1.630	1.620	-0.61%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.810	0.800	-1.23%
JO. INT'L TRADING CENT	0.270	0.260	-3.70%
AL RAY	5.400	5.400	0.00%
AL-ZARQA FOR EDU	0.850	0.880	+3.53%
ARAB INT'L FOR INVS	1.840	1.840	0.00%
JO. INVS. HOLDING	0.850	0.850	+4.71%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.150	1.150	0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX	86.620		+0.91%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK (75)	0.910	0.890	-2.20%
JO. TRADING FACILITIES	0.430	0.410	-4.65%
CENTRAL STORG	0.330	0.310	-6.06%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.680	0.680	-1.45%
AL-EKBAL	0.810	0.800	-1.23%
AL-SHARQ	1.080	1.100	+1.85%
AL-DAWLAH	0.610	0.600	-1.64%
ARAB INT'L TRADE	0.310	0.310	0.00%
NARCO	0.260	0.260	-3.85%
TEXTILE & PLASTIC	0.260	0.270	+3.85%
MIDDLE EAST PHARY 90	0.600	0.600	0.00%
UNION TOBACCO	2.800	2.810	+0.36%
AL RAZI	0.640	0.640	0.00%
UNIFIED ENG. IND	0.210	0.210	0.00%
NUTRI DAR	0.690	0.700	+1.45%
ARAB JO. INVS	1.020	1.000	-1.96%

Dow may hit 10,000 soon but may not stay there

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks were riding an express train to the sky in trading this year, prompting excited speculation that they will soon arrive at the next big milestone, Dow 10,000.

The economy is growing, inflation is low, and investors have piles of cash to invest. All of that makes Wall Street analysts confident that the Dow Jones industrial average will easily add another five per cent in the first quarter of this year and surpass the five-digit mark.

"In 30 to 60 days, we'll be knocking on the door of 10,000," said Marshall Acuff, equity strategist at Salomon Smith Barney.

Despite the enthusiasm, Acuff and others still worry that stock prices may have risen too far, too fast, and that the market's climb has been too dependent on speculation in technology stocks. They also worry that gains in corporate profits will taper off, almost always had news for stocks.

But right now investors have dollars to invest. Some cashed out of their money-losing stocks last year to take tax writeoffs and now want to put the remaining cash back to work. Others are using year-end bonuses, pay raises, and gifts while still others are making start-of-year contributions to retirement accounts.

Assets in money market funds, where investors often park money until they decide where to invest them, soared by almost \$33 billion in the past week to \$1.4 trillion. That's the largest increase in three months, said the Investment Company Institute, which keeps the figures.

With one-month money market funds yielding around 4.5 per cent, investors will move those funds into higher-yielding investments like stocks, said Rick Jandrain, chief investment officer for equity securities at Banc One Investment Advisors in Columbus, Ohio.

Bulls were vindicated again Friday by a government report that employers added 378,000 jobs in December, the most in 15 months.

"The economy continues just to cook," said

Charles Pradilla, chief investment strategist at SG Cowen Securities.

Still, there is some potential turbulence that could slow the trip to 10K. Continued economic growth will dash any hopes that the Federal Reserve (Fed) will again lower interest rates. Three cuts since Sept. 29 were largely responsible for the market's gains, as the Fed sought to juice the economy.

Another potential pitfall is the recent drop in the dollar, to just over 110 yen on Friday from nearly 148 yen last July. The yen has risen along with Japanese interest rates.

A weaker dollar can boost exports from the United States, but otherwise it is bad news. It could discourage Japanese investors from buying dollar-denominated investments. If it gets low enough, it could pressure the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates.

Higher rates are almost never good for stocks because they raise corporate operating costs and discourage consumer spending. But rates now are so low they have room to rise a little without damaging the stock rally, Pradilla said.

That leaves investors still to wrestle with the question of whether the market is too expensive, given the widely held belief that profits will soften in 1999.

Investors remember a famous admonition from Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's last summer that the soaring market was the result of "irrational exuberance."

Greenspan was echoed last week by Deputy Treasury Secretary Alice Rivlin, who said that given her expectation of a decline in profit growth this year, stocks are overvalued.

Indomitable bull Abby Joseph Cohen of Goldman Sachs advised investors to trim stock investments slightly, saying prices were "less attractive today than in September," when they were 30 per cent lower.

While Byron Wien of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter suggested the Dow could hit 10,000 as early as this month, he also predicted it will end the year lower than that if the rally continues to be confined to high-flying technology shares. "I am concerned the narrowness of the advance," Acuff noted that investors began this past week to broaden their purchases to include financial services, transportation and retail stocks.

"We're getting a little bit better breadth," he said, "and if it continues, it will help."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR JANUARY, MONDAY 11, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You could get into one of those arguments today that's impossible to win. No point in fighting heads. It's a waste of time and certainly there are other things you could do. For example, look at it from the other person's point of view. You may decide to abandon your position, and that could be the wisest course.

Taurus: (April 20 to May 20) Although your mind is far away, it looks like your body is stuck at home. That could cause complications and even accidents, so be careful. It's a better day to have folks over to your house than to travel. Why not do your shopping by telephone and fix dinner yourself instead of going out?

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you can get into the project you're working on, it could be fun. Make that your intention, because it looks like you could get a great opportunity to advance in your career very soon. Others are watching to see whether or not you whistle while you work. Put on a good show for them, even if you don't feel like it.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Today looks good for love and romance. You could end up making a big commitment, even if you didn't think you were ready yet. You've got a nice grand trine in water signs, which will enhance your intuition, especially in romantic situations. Don't make promises if you don't intend to keep them. That's one thing that won't go over well.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You need to be working hard, saving your money and planning what you're going to build next. Something solid, stable and dependable is highly recommended. Leo is the sign of children, and you may have a little difficulty growing up. Today, you get to show that you really have — or at least that you're aware of the concept.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Others may find you uncharacteristically quiet today. Its not that you're blue. You're thinking. You're studying something that's been put in front of you. It's a difficult job, even for you, and that's saying something. Time to hit the books. Do the homework. Consult the experts. Do what you must to gain control of the situation.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Today is a good day to shop for something you need for your home. Before you spend all your money, perhaps you can come up with a way to bring more in. It's possible that a friend would like to buy something you don't need anymore. This could turn out to be a win-win situation!

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're strong, powerful, magnetic, charismatic — everything you always wanted to be. Everybody's drawn to you, whether they know it or not. They want to do whatever you have in mind, and that's fine with you. You've got a scheme already figured out, so now, you need only put the players in place and tell them to act their parts.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're caught in a bit of squeeze today. You're supposed to do something, but you can't. You don't have enough money yet. You just might have to ask for a postponement. If you handle this responsibly, there won't be any hard feelings. It might cost you a little, but that's OK. Don't despair. The story has a happy ending.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You'll have more fun today if there's a team to back you up. None of you has the whole answer, but everybody's got a little part. Something that looks impossible to you will look easy to one of your friends. The same thing works the other way around, too. Offer your experience freely.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Ever feel like you're smashing your head against a brick wall? You might feel like that today, if you're trying to get a new idea past someone stubborn. Just wait. The opposition will fade over the next few days. If you can wait even longer, until the sun goes into your sign next week, you'll have a distinct advantage.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You could be in for a surprise today, but don't worry. It looks like everything turns out fine. A friend can give you the inside scoop on a new job development. If you're in the market for a new job, you could find that, too. It's definitely a good day for networking. Let people who care about you know what you're up to.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Trading on Lebanese bourse down 50 per cent in 1998

BEIRUT (AFP) — Trading on the Beirut Stock Exchange (BSE) was down 50 per cent last year because of the Asian financial crisis and high interest rates on the Lebanese pound, BSE president Gabriel Sehawi said.

"The volume of transactions went down from \$650 million in 1997 to \$330 million" last year, he said.

"The crisis at emerging markets prompted foreign investors to retrieve their investments, and high interest rates on Lebanese treasury bonds attracted most savings of the Lebanese and those of some Gulf nationals," he said.

Sehawi said government plans to privatise a number of public services will help boost trading on the bourse, which reopened in 1996 after a forced, 13-year closure during the 1975-1990 civil war.

Before the war there were 42 listed companies

on the exchange, but now that number has dwindled to 12 — with two of those capitalised at under \$3 million.

Sehawi said the BSE's current capitalisation of \$2.4 billion could be boosted by another billion if major firms such as the Casino du Liban and the ABC superstore were to start listing their shares on the exchange.

Two new firms are to begin listing on the exchange at the end of January, he said.

Among the firms currently listed are the giant real-estate firm Solidere, the Banque Libanaise pour le Commerce and the Bank of Beirut.

Solidere — the giant real-estate joint-stock company entrusted to rebuild Beirut's war-devastated downtown — suffered the most among BSE shares in 1998, falling in December below its \$10 initial price before recovering slightly earlier this month.

"When Solidere, one of

the 100 largest Arab companies, opened up its capital to foreign investors in November 1997, its price went up to \$12.5 and daily bourse activity increased to \$6 million," he said.

But that boost was "promptly hit by the Asian financial crisis," he said.

He added that interest rates on treasury bonds have also been hard hit, running at 13.12 per cent on one-year bonds and 16.07 per cent on two-years, down from more than 30 per cent at the bourse's reopening in 1996.

Sehawi said the BSE's position could be strengthened by taking part in future sovereign and private Lebanese bond issues on international markets.

The Lebanese government and several banks and industrial firms have issued \$3.5 billion in Eurobonds and other notes on the London and Luxembourg stock exchanges since 1994.

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International Handball Federation to discuss Jordan's complaint Jan. 20

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan Handball Federation (JHF) President Sari Hamdan Sunday said the International Handball Federation (IHF) would issue a ruling on Jordan's complaint of its recent "unjust disqualification" from the World Championship finals in its Jan. 20 meeting.

The meeting will issue the IHF decision one week before the draw for the World Championship finals which will be held in Egypt.

Jordan has appealed its case with the IHF after lodging a complaint with the Asian Handball Federation (AHF) after meetings of the Olympic Council of Asia held on the sidelines of the Asian Games in Bangkok in December.

The Kingdom had announced that

it would freeze membership in the AHF if a fair ruling was not reached regarding Jordan's disqualification from the finals.

The JHF president reiterated that Jordan was firm in its stand and quest for a fair solution as it had officially qualified to the finals which will be held in Cairo next June.

Hamdan said "there was a complete disregard to internal regulations and norms. If that continues we have no option but to freeze membership in the AHF."

The issue emerged at the West Asian Qualifiers where hosts Saudi Arabia took first place, while Jordan came runner up and officially qualified.

However, following Jordan's 32-19 win over Bahrain, the technical committee of the championship

announced that Kuwait qualified as runner up when Bahrain's results were cancelled due to technicality in their final match against Jordan.

The technical committee scrapped Bahrain's results at the championship citing that Bahrain had handed Jordan the win by passive play in the second half.

"Bahrain did not pull out nor did it hand us the win. On the contrary they were trying hard to narrow the gap," Hamdan said.

"The technical committee of any championship does not have the authority to issue take decisions but should leave that to the federation. Similarly Asian or international regulations do not stipulate cancelling the entire results of a team but rather considering a withdrawing team as loser by a 10-0 score."

Hamdan also pointed out that the

Slovenian referees of the match did not advise that Bahrain had a technical error but it was rather the technical committee who took that decision single-handedly.

Hamdan said Jordan now had a ranking on the map of Asian Handball after recent activity on the club and national team levels. Furthermore, he stressed that the men's and women's teams were training hard for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games in Amman under the new Croatian coach.

Bahrain has meanwhile lodged an appeal with the OCA and the IHF citing "injustice" to the Bahraini team which had players suspended in their match against Jordan before the technical committee cancelled their results.



Sixth seed Steffi Graf returns a shot during a practise round at the White City stadium in Sydney 10 January. It is the first time Graf has played in Sydney since 1984 and she has drawn a first-round match with Japan's Ai Sugiyama (AFP photo)

Broncos stampede Dolphins in NFL playoffs

DENVER (AFP)

Reigning Super Bowl champion Denver moved one victory from a return to American football's championship game with a 38-3 romp over Miami here Saturday.

The Broncos, who won their 18th home game in a row, will host the January 17 American Conference title game against Sunday's New York Jets-Jacksonville winner for a trip to the January 31 Super Bowl.

National Football League rushing champion Terrell Davis, kept to a season-low 29 yards by the Dolphin defense in a December 21 loss at Miami, ran for 199 yards and two touchdowns to spark the rout.

Davis scored first-quarter touchdowns on runs of one and 20 yards and Derek Loville added another on an 11-yard run in the second quarter to give Denver a 21-3 half-time lead.

Davis raced 62 yards early in the third quarter to set up Jason Elam's 32-yard field goal, putting the cap on the fourth-best rushing performance in NFL history.

In the fourth quarter, Rod Smith caught a 28-yard touchdown pass from John Elway and Neil Smith returned a fumble 79 yards for a touchdown to complete the Denver rout.

The Dolphins suffered their most lopsided playoff loss, replacing a 38-16 drubbing by San Francisco in the 1985 Super Bowl. The Dolphins have not won a playoff game away from Miami since 1972, going 0-7.

Miami's only points came on Olindo Mare's 22-yard field goal five minutes into the second quarter.

Dan Marino was able to recapture the form that saw him throw for 355 yards and four touchdowns in Miami's regular-season triumph over Denver. He threw for 243 yards but was intercepted three times.

Elway threw for 182 yards and a touchdown.

Pippen wants to stay with Bulls

CHICAGO (AFP) — Scottie Pippen, whose future plans could play a pivotal role in deciding whether or not Michael Jordan retires, wants to return to the three-time defending NBA champion Chicago Bulls.

Pippen had ripped club management for not signing him to a long-term deal after the Bulls won their sixth title in eight years last June, saying he would not return.

But his attitude has changed, agent Jimmy Sexton said.

"Scottie Pippen will be theirs to lose," Sexton said. "Scottie loves to city of Chicago and the fans. If we can work out a deal that will work for Scottie, we would love to stay there."

Pippen reportedly wants a four-year contract worth \$14 million a year, the richest possible contract under the new owners' union labor deal. With future raises, such a deal could net Pippen an average of more than \$17 million a year over the life of the deal.

Bulls officials have hinted they are worried about a long-term deal for a man who is coming off back surgery, even one who has played through pain to help Jordan make the Bulls a dynasty.

But Sexton said Pippen has been working out in Chicago for six weeks with no back pain.

NBA officials have allowed clubs to begin negotiations with players, although none can be signed until a labour deal is written by lawyers and signed, a process expected to take until January 18.

Jordan, whose return is essential to helping the NBA win back fans angered by the labor fight, has said he wants no part of a rebuilding team and that the Bulls letting Pippen get away would be a sign to him they are rebuilding for the future and not committed to trying to win a seventh NBA title in nine years.

Falcons edge 49ers to advance in NFL playoffs

ATLANTA (AFP) — Jamal Anderson ran for 113 yards and two touchdowns here Saturday, sending the Atlanta Falcons to their first conference championship game with a 20-18 victory over San Francisco.

Atlanta will face Sunday's Minnesota-Arizona winner on January 17 in a National Football League semi-final, the National Conference title game, for a berth in the January 31 Super Bowl at Miami.

Atlanta coach Dan Reeves, back on the sidelines less than one month after heart bypass surgery, watched Anderson score on runs of 34 and 2 yards to move Atlanta one triumph from an unprecedented Super Bowl trip.

"It's unbelievable. This whole year has been incredible," Reeves said. "We never dreamed we would be in the position we are in. We have just got to take it to the next step."

Atlanta intercepted 49ers quarterback Steve Young three times as the Falcons, 3-13 two seasons ago, won their 10th game in a row and rose to 9-0 at home this season.

"It's a tremendous win for the team," Anderson said. "We overcame all odds and adversity. It's a great feeling."

Anderson, who carried 26 times, dedicated his game to two recently deceased uncles. But he made a major mistake by running out of bounds in the final seconds, stopping the clock to give the 49ers a final chance.

"I didn't want to go out of bounds," Anderson said. "My knee planted funny

and I didn't want to take any chances on blowing my knee out. I knew our defense would get the job done. I wasn't worried about it."

The 49ers had their chance but Young, whose last-second touchdown won a week earlier, did not have another miracle available as Atlanta's William White made a game-clinching interception on the final play.

The 49ers, who have never rallied beyond seven points to win a playoff game, capped a 13-play, 87-yard scoring drive with Young's eight-yard touchdown run with 2:57 to play.

Ty Detmer threw a two-point conversion pass to Greg Clark to pull the 49ers within the final margin. The conversion began as a kick attempt but the ball was hiked high and Detmer had to leap to grab the ball and then scramble before making the throw.

Danish kicker Morten Andersen booted two field goals after pickoffs to give Atlanta a 20-10 lead.

Eugene Robinson's interception and 77-yard return set up a 29-yard effort late in the third quarter and White's pickoff led to a 32-yard field goal with 10:33 remaining.

For the second playoff game in a row, the 49ers were aided by a controversial official's call that went in their favour.

Late in the first half, Young flipped a lateral to his right side to Terry Kirby, who appeared to lose a fumble that Atlanta defender Chuck Smith ran into the end zone for a 21-0 Falcons

lead.

But officials ruled Kirby was downed before the fumble, nullifying the Atlanta touchdown run-back.

A week ago, Jerry Rice had been ruled down before what television replays showed was a fumble and Young made the most of a second chance by throwing the game-winning touchdown pass to defeat Green Bay.

This time, Young made a 17-yard touchdown pass to Rice, who faked out defender Ray Buchanan to cap a nine-play, 80-yard drive and put the 49ers on the scoreboard 70 seconds before half-time.

A 49er interception set up Wade Richey's 36-yard field goal on the final play of the first half, pulling the 49ers within 14-10.

San Francisco's Terrell Owens mocked Atlanta's "Dirty Bird" touchdown celebration dance after Rice's score, ending his version of the strut by drawing a finger along his throat.

The Falcons dominated the first half as Anderson ran for a touchdown in each quarter while Atlanta's defense held the 49ers offense in check.

San Francisco lost rusher Garrison Hearst to a broken left leg on the game's first play from scrimmage, a seven-yard run that ended with Hearst being helped off the field.

Rios concerned by hamstring injury

AUCKLAND (AP)

World No. 2 Marcelo Rios admits he is concerned about a lingering hamstring injury as he puts the final touches on his Australian Open preparations.

Rios defends his Auckland Open title from Monday before heading to Melbourne, where he'll likely be the top seed following the withdrawal of Pete Sampras.

Rios was beaten in the Australian Open final last year by Petr Korda but admits his right hamstring, injured in training 10 days ago, might hold the key to his hopes of a Grand Slam title.

"It was pretty bad last week," Rios said Sunday. "I was trying to practice as well as take some days off, but it is much better now. I'm having it treated twice a day until I play on Tuesday."

Rios, who won seven tournaments in 1998 starting with the Auckland title, said he didn't care about his Australian Open seeding.

"I don't think there is much difference between being No. 1 or No. 2 at the Australian Open because all the players there are pretty good," Rios said.

Rios takes on 66th ranked Romanian Andre Pavel in his first-round match on Tuesday at the Auckland Open.

"He's a strong player, he will be tough and he has been playing well," Rios said.

Second-seeded Spaniard Felix Mantilla, ranked 20, is to play a qualifier in the first round, while third seed Wayne Ferreira, of South Africa, ranked 26th in the world, plays New Zealander Brett Steven.

Sydney International Martinez makes solid start

SYDNEY (AP) — Spain's Conchita Martinez scored an easy straight-sets victory over Australia's Rachel McQuillan in their first-round match at the Sydney International tournament Sunday.

The No. 5 seed won 6-0, 6-3 in one of just two matches on the opening day of the men's and women's Australian Open lead-in tournament.

Alicia Molik continued a big week for Australian teenagers when she upset No. 16-ranked Natasha Zvereva of Belarus 6-3, 6-4.

The 17-year-old's victory followed the impressive run by Australia's world junior champion Jelena Dokic, 15, who helped the country win the Hopman Cup team competition.

Molik set up a second-round clash against Swiss World No. 2 Martina Hingis.

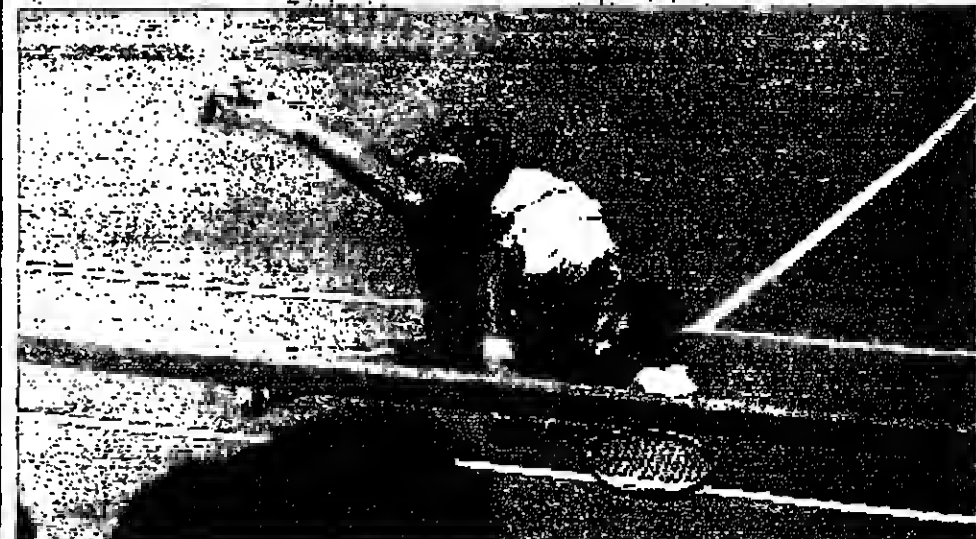
"I've got nothing to lose, I'm the dark horse — she's probably the one with every worry in the world," Molik said.

"I've watched her dominate for so long and it'll be good to see how my game stands up to hers — I'll go out there and play the same way I did today. I think it'll be a good contest."

Molik, who works with former Australian No. 1 Nicole Pietrangeli, punished Zvereva's second serve time after time, gaining breaks in the sixth game of the first set and last game of the match.

"What pleased me most was that I didn't let Natasha have a break point," Molik said. "Natasha's got good flair and a lot of touch and she can do a lot of good things but I just stayed with the way I wanted to play, just stay with her."

Eight of the world's top 16 men's players, including Alex Corretja, Pat Rafter and Greg Rusedski, and 17 of the top 20 women will play the tournament on Rebound Ace courts. The Australian Open starts Jan. 18.



Australian Top seed for the Sydney International Pat Rafter takes a fall during a practise with coach Tony Roche 10 January. Rafter was unhurt but he has drawn a first round match with Australia's latest tennis sensation Lleyton Hewitt (AFP photo)

Henman upsets Alami to reach Qatar Open final

DOHA (AFP) — Tim Henman stayed on course to complete a perfect launch of his 1999 season here late Saturday when he swept into the final of the \$1 million Qatar Open by completing a stylish 6-4, 6-2 victory over Moroccan Karim Alami.

The top-seeded British player, who is bidding for his fifth career title, now faces German qualifier Rainer Schuttler who saw off France's former Wimbledon finalist Cedric Pioline 3-6, 6-2, 7-5.

Against Alami, Henman, who had been taken through three difficult sets in the previous round by American Jeff Tarango, made a slow start. He dropped his opening service

game and trailed 0-2 before recovering his poise, spraying the court with some superb winners.

Henman took a stranglehold on the second set when he broke Alami's second service game to lead 3-1, this time doing the damage with two superb lobs.

An increasingly frustrated Alami, who enjoyed the support of the Doha crowd throughout, earned a warning when he smashed a ball out of court before coming out to serve and stay in the match at 2-5.

Henman squandered three match points but eventually clinched victory when Alami sliced a backhand wide.

"It's been a good start to the year so far," the British

number-one admitted after his win. But he made it clear he would not be underestimating the 22-year-old Schuttler.

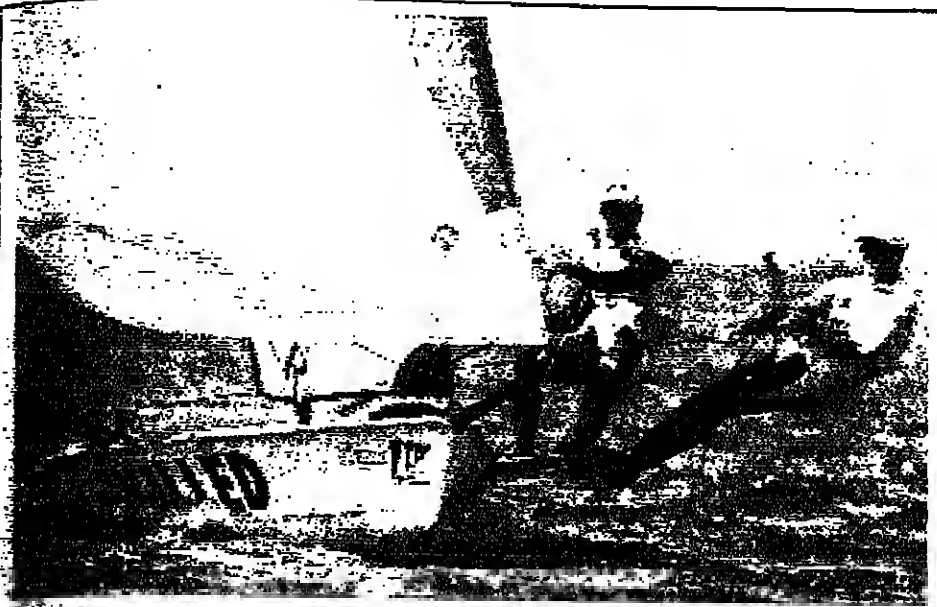
The German, who is ranked a modest 111th, beat Henman in Split last year although Henman avenged the defeat in the new ATP event in Battersea Park, London.

Schuttler, ranked 111th in the world, continued his giant-killing run by outlasting Pioline in a two hour marathon.

It was his seventh win since arriving in Doha to play in the qualifying event and came just 24 hours after putting out fourth-seed Goran Ivanisevic of Croatia.

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Current world champion Chris Nicholson of Australia (L) and teammate Ed Wright (R) sail to the finish line in an early heat on the first day of the International 49er class sailed in light winds at the 1999 World Sailing Championships on Port Phillip Bay near Melbourne 10 January. A new two-man high performance skiff, the 49ers were recently given Olympic status and is the fastest of all the Olympic classes (AFP photo)

Rivaldo at the double as Barcelona win

BARCELONA (R) — A second-half double from Brazilian striker Rivaldo wrapped up a 4-2 victory for Barcelona in a thrilling Spanish first division clash with Athletic Bilbao on Saturday.

In a match played in torrential rain, the Catalan club stormed into a 2-0 lead with goals from Luis Enrique Martinez and Philip Cocu, before Ismael Urzaiz revived the visitors shortly after the break with his 11th strike of the season.

Rivaldo immediately snuffed out Bilbao hopes of a comeback with a neatly taken finish and it was the Brazilian who clinched a third successive win for Barcelona with a late backheel after Julien Guerrero had got the visitors back in contention with 18 minutes to go.

Victory for Barcelona takes them up to second place in the table, a point behind leaders Mallorca and level with Celta Vigo, Real Madrid and Valencia, who are all in action on Sunday.

Louis van Gaal's fast improving team made the best of the poor conditions throughout the game.

The breakthrough came on 22 minutes as Sergi Barjuan's cross was headed home by the ever willing Luis Enrique, who out-jumped the Bilbao defence comfortably.

Barcelona's second was the pick of the six goals and came as the home side once again opted for the aerial route.

Rivaldo's long ball forward was headed on by Patrick Kluivert and Dutchman Cocu struck a spectacular volley past Imanol Exteberria.

Bilbao did well to come back in the second half, Urzaiz winning the race for a loose ball after Ruud Hesp could only parry Guerrero's long-range effort.

But Rivaldo's decisive contribution — his first a smart

finish after a through-header from Sergi, his second an astute back-heel after the ball had been held up in the penalty area — made sure that even a second Bilbao strike from Guerrero would be insufficient.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Aref Hussein to move to Kufrsoun

AMMAN — Kufrsoun Club is negotiating with Al Hussein Club to sign Aref Hussein, one of Jordan's veteran soccer players, as of the 1999 soccer season. According to sources, negotiations are moving on a positive note and Al Hussein Club has asked for JD5,000 to release the player. Kufrsoun, who last year won the Federation Shield title, last week signed Mohammad Batayneh of the Northern Ghor Sbeikh Hussein Club for JD1,500.



Sweden's Thomas Enqvist holds his trophy after winning the AAPT Championships at the Memorial Drive in Adelaide (AFP photo)

Enqvist wins Adelaide men's hardcourt title

ADELAIDE (R) — Second seed Thomas Enqvist of Sweden beat defending champion Lleyton Hewitt of Australia to win the Adelaide men's hardcourt tennis tournament on Sunday.

Enqvist, the World No. 22, overcame a slow start to take the title 4-6 6-1 6-2.

The Swede was thrilled with the win, after having been forced to take three months off last year with a foot injury. "It's very important for my confidence to feel I can play good tennis and win tournaments again," Enqvist said after his victory.

Hewitt, 17, became the lowest ranked singles victor in ATP history when he won in Adelaide last year with a ranking of 55th.

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Dakar race claims 40th victim

PARIS (R) — The Dakar rally has claimed its 40th victim in 20 years, a policeman who died after a collision between a rally car and a Burkina Faso police vehicle.

Race organizer Hubert Auriol said he was shocked by the accident late on Friday night near the end of the eighth stage at Bobo Dioulassa in Burkina Faso.

"We are shocked and we will apologise to the Burkina Faso government," Auriol told Sunday's edition of the sports daily L'Equipe.

Five Mauritanian spectators were killed in an accident in last year's race. The last competitor to die was French motorcyclist Jean-Pierre Leduc in 1997. The event's creator, Frenchman Thierry Sabine perished in a helicopter crash in 1986.

Basketball federation cancels all penalties, accepts resignation of vice-president

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — The Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) Sunday announced that they were cancelling all suspensions and fines imposed on clubs and players during the 1998 season.

A JBF source said the move "comes as Jordanians rejoice after the recovery of His Majesty King Hussein and his return soon to the country after six months of treatment for cancer of the lymph glands in the United States."

The lifting of penalties means the four month rift between the JBF and Al Jazireh Club will probably be resolved after the former suspended four of Al Jazireh's players and imposed a heavy fine when the club decided to pull its players from national teams citing "discriminatory treat-

ment" on the part of the JBF.

Al Jazireh's decision to withdraw its players from the men's national team on the evening of their departure to an international tournament in Taipei, started a controversy which has not since been resolved.

The Ministry of Culture and Youth intervened and tried to bring the two sides together, however, the JBF board insisted on carrying out regulations and submitted a mass resignation which was later on retracted.

The issue indefinitely delayed the start of national team training and with the Pan-Arab Games only eight months away, the teams are still idle awaiting training to begin.

The women's team has not been regrouped since the July 1997 Pan-Arab Games while the men's team last

played in the Asian Championship last year. Both teams missed participation in the Bangkok Asian Games in December.

Local competitions were also restricted to only three events drawing criticism from many clubs who had prepared their players and had spent allocated funds for that purpose.

In its latest meeting the JBF also decided to annul all subcommittees and accept the resignation of vice-president Nu'man Asfour from the board.

The JBF also congratulated Al Wihdan and Homenetmen clubs for their promotion to the First Division and called club representatives for a meeting to discuss the 1999 season.

Push begins for Samaranch resignation amid 2002 Summer Games chaos

SALT LAKE CITY (AFP) — International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch should resign in the wake of a bribery scandal, a member of the 2002 Winter Games organising committee declared.

Ken Bullock, on the executive board of the Salt Lake City organisers, said Samaranch should step down to restore trust in the Olympic movement the way 2002 Games executives Frank Joklik and Dave Johnson did on Friday.

"Until President Samaranch follows Frank's example, the Olympic movement will not be able to move forward," Bullock said.

Joklik, president of the organising group, and vice-president Johnson, a major figure in Salt Lake City's winning Games bid, resigned in the wake of a bribery scandal that has hampered vital corporate fund-raising.

IOC members were treated to cash payments, tuitions for relatives, expensive gifts, free health care, housing and travel by a Salt Lake bid committee trying to buy enough votes to defeat rival IOC suitors.

Now the IOC, United States Olympic Committee, 2002 organisers and U.S. Justice Department are conducting investigations into the matter.

Samaranch has admitted accepting gifts of firearms from Salt Lake organisers, but said dollar limits on bribe gifts imposed on other IOC members do not apply to him.

U.S. IOC member Anita DeFranz defended Samaranch but said an

IOC probe, expected to be complete January 24, could force other IOC members out.

"I don't think we will have executions," she said. "But we will have fewer members."

The scandal might even enable Samaranch to increase his power by shifting the selection power for future Games from the IOC to a select committee headed by the Spanish Olympic host.

Corruption in the wake of such absolute authority undermines the public trust in the Olympics, said Utah governor Mike Leavitt, who wants action from the IOC to prevent such abuses in the future.

"The culture of corruption has taken root because of a lack of accountability," he said. "Power unchecked is power abused. I call upon the Olympic family to form an agenda of reform and carry it out."

Leavitt also said that Salt Lake organisers were only doing what they felt was a necessary part of the bid process to stay on pace with rivals.

"There is a sinister dark corner of corruption in the Olympic movement," he said. "This subculture of IOC corruption didn't start in Salt Lake City. But it must end here. The integrity of the rings must be restored."

Leavitt also gave city officials bad news — the deal they thought shielded taxpayers from bearing the cost of any debt from the Games is against the law.

Had that fact been known earlier in the process, it likely would have

eroded public support for bidding on the Games.

Now Utah taxpayers have no guarantee they will not be liable for cost overruns on a \$1.4 billion budget — a budget that will have a much tougher time raising corporate support in the wake of the scandal.

The U.S. Olympic Committee expects trouble meeting its original goal of \$250 million in corporate support by October 1, so the deadline has been extended.

John Krinsky, the U.S. Olympic corporate sponsors recruiter, said only the telecommunications firm U.S. West has threatened to withdraw support over the scandal.

U.S. West will not make a scheduled \$5 million payment by January 31 as part of its \$50 million pledge to the Games, waiting until the scandal investigations are complete to commit to the deal.

Krinsky said that without Joklik and Johnson resigning the way they did, he likely would not have been able to produce the corporate money needed to finance the 2002 Games.

"It would have been extremely difficult, and perhaps maybe not possible, to raise the funds necessary for the Games," he said.

"We will soon be back on track. Many sponsors have been with us through wars and boycotts. They will be back. We're going to make our numbers. It's just going to take longer."

One bit of good news passed along from federal officials to state lawmakers is that they can count

upon federal dollars for Games-related transportation construction, much of it already under way.

Even those decisions have been controversial, with one ski resort owner gaining long-term post-Olympic benefits from a more direct highway to the airport after having been named an Olympic ski venue.

So who would want to take the job overseeing the 2002 Games organizers? Speculation here has centered on a former president of the area's National Basketball Association team and a 1988 Olympic official.

Dave Checketts, past president of the NBA's Utah Jazz, is president of the holding company that owns the New York Knicks, New York Rangers and Madison Square Garden arena. He has made no comment on reports he will be considered for the job.

In line to be chief executive officer is Roger Jackson, a member of the 1988 Calgary Winter Games organizing committee who is on an IOC commission overseeing plans for the 2002 Games.

Whether that makes him too close to IOC-level corruption for Utah supporters is uncertain, but organizers have said they definitely want someone with Utah ties to take charge.

Such local trust will likely be vital to securing the 30,000 volunteers and ensuring faith that the hiring of 600 employees over the next three years will be done on the basis of skill and not corruption.

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMARA MIRSCH

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BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

Both vulnerable: North double-

NORTH
A J 5
K 10 9
A J 10 9
7 6 5

WEST
Q 9 8
8 3 2
7 6 4
A Q 10 8

SOUTH
K 10
A Q J 7 4
Q 8
K 4 3 2

The bidding:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
15 Pass 15 Pass
INT Pass 34 Pass
30 Pass 47 Pass

Opening lead: Two of 7

"Interesting hand," remarked the kibitzer. "Declarer lost a trick in a suit where there was no loser and got it back later with interest 10-land a contract that was in jeopardy." This was the hand that evoked such a profound comment.

North had a choice of poor rebids — a heart raise with only three-card support or one no trump without a club stopper. With a perfectly balanced hand, North rightly, in our opinion, chose the more descriptive one: no trump. But South thought the hand might play better

in hearts once North showed preference.

Reluctant to lead from an honor in the undealt spade suit, West selected a passive trump for the opening salvo. Declarer's problem was obvious. The only danger to the hand was for East to gain the lead to shoot a club through the king. The solution was a masterpiece of technique.

Declarer won the opening lead in dummy and immediately led a low spade, finessing the ten. West won with the queen but could not attack clubs, so the defender ended with another trump, taken in dummy. The king of spades was cleared from hand, a diamond was led to the ace and the ace of spades was finessed for a diamond discard. Now the jack of diamonds was led for a ruffing finesse, and the defenders had no counter.

If West held the king, the club suit would again be imperative to attack and there was still the king of trumps in dummy as an entry to discard two more clubs from hand on the diamonds. When the jack of diamonds held, declarer shuffled a club and continued with the diamond ten. East covered, declarer ruffed, returned to dummy with the king of hearts, in the process extracting the last enemy fang, and discarded another club on the nine of diamonds. Declarer could now afford to lead a club to the king in an effort to score an overtrick. No luck!

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Saudi Arabia, Egypt urge Iraqis to overthrow Saddam

S. Arabia to recommend easing of sanctions

JEDDAH (AP) — Saudi Arabia's official news agency on Sunday urged Iraqis to oust their leader, Saddam Hussein, a call echoed by Egypt's foreign minister.

These were the first statements by Arab nations explicitly demanding Saddam's removal and came in the wake of blistering criticism by President Saddam's regime of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt.

Also Sunday, foreign ministers of Arab Gulf nations began a closed-door meeting in Jeddah to discuss U.N. trade sanctions on Iraq imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The discussions were behind closed doors, but an official said a Saudi proposal on calling for easing U.N. trade sanctions on Iraq will win wide support. The official spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Saudi proposal could be an effort to show that while it opposes Iraq's regime it is sympathetic to the plight of common Iraqis suffering from eight years of shortages because of the sanctions.

In a commentary released just before the foreign ministers' meeting began, the official Saudi Press Agency

accused Saddam of killing and torturing thousands of Iraqis. Calling him the "Baghdad tyrant," the commentary said it is the "Iraqi people who need a revolution" to topple Saddam.

The dispatch was signed off by the news agency's political editor, who was not named. Such a sign-off is normally used for columns written by the country's information minister.

In similar comments to be published Monday in a Berlin newspaper, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Saddam is "shaming the entire Arab region through his politics."

The Berliner Kurier newspaper quoted Musa as saying that Saddam has caused "unceasing suffering to his people."

"Iraq is a rich country that has become poor under Saddam Hussein's regime. We are of the opinion that he is no longer capable of being responsible for his country's politics," Musa was quoted as saying. A copy of the interview was released Sunday.

In recent days, Iraqi newspapers and officials have accused Egypt of being a U.S.

puppet. On Sunday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Sahhaf accused Saudi Arabia and Kuwait of aiding the U.S.-British bombardment last month on Iraqi defence and other installations.

An indication of the hardening Saudi stand against Iraq came in an article in the Saudi-owned Ashraq Al Awsat newspaper Sunday, which quoted an unnamed Saudi source as saying: "We will not support the Iraqi regime... the Saudi position is to support the Iraqi people."

Ashraq Al Awsat and another Saudi paper, Al Hayat, said the Saudi initiative on easing the U.N. sanctions would propose that Iraq be allowed to buy and sell all goods — except military equipment or material that could be used for military purposes.

The U.N. Security Council has said the sanctions will not be lifted until Iraq eliminates its weapons of mass destruction.

Baghdad's relations with a number of Arab countries deteriorated in the aftermath of the Dec. 16-19 airstrikes, which aimed at punishing Iraq for its failure to cooperate with U.N. weapons inspectors responsible for dismantling Iraq's illegal weapons.



LAUGHING CELEBRATION: People of all ages practise Hasya Yog, a new form of yogic laughter, as part of a three-hour laughter fair at the Shivaji Park ground in central Bombay Sunday. Twenty thousand members of the laughter club from all over India and abroad took part in the event to celebrate World Laughter Day (AFP photo)

Amnesty launches campaign over child victims of war

LONDON (AFP) — Children have become the deliberate targets of war, with hundreds of thousands actively involved in fighting and millions others brutalised and made homeless, according to Amnesty International.

Launching a campaign Monday to pluck children out of the killing zones, the human rights organisation released a report highlighting some of the worst cases of abuse it found.

"They included children being forced to kill one another, often dazed with alcohol and drugs. Others were massacred, mutilated or taken into slavery or had to watch as their parents were slaughtered in front of them."

Even those who managed to flee suffer deprivation and hunger as refugees.

The report, "Children in the Firing Line," was timed to coincide with a U.N. working group meeting in Geneva from Monday to discuss raising from 15 to 18 the minimum age for recruitment into armed forces.

"Even a warlord may be persuaded to recognise the

rights of children," said Maggie Black, one of a panel of experts at a news conference launching the campaign.

The report details accounts from the likes of a 15-year-old girl, forcibly recruited into the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda.

She told Amnesty she was ordered to kill another child who tried to flee, forced to watch as a boy was hacked to death for failing to raise the alarm, and given 35 days' training before being sent off to fight.

In Sri Lanka, a boy described how, after joining rebel forces aged 11, he once held a child by the legs and bashed his head against a wall, and enjoyed hearing the mother scream.

A study in Rwanda found that 16 per cent of children had had to hide under dead bodies in order to survive massacres.

The report also highlights reports of children being murdered in Afghanistan, Algeria, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and southern Sudan.

Often the killings were carried out by rebels, but others were perpetrated by government forces. In some cases children were abducted as slaves.

"Millions of children have seen what no human being should ever have to see," said Amnesty campaign coordinator Rob Beasley.

"Hundreds of thousands have been forced to do things not even a trained soldier should ever have to do."

The report estimates that 300,000 children are active combatants, and 14 million are refugees. It also says children make up over a third of war casualties.

Two million children have been killed in armed conflicts over the last 10 years and at least 10 million have witnessed brutality such as the murder of family members.

Whereas at the start of the century some 90 per cent of war casualties were military, now 90 per cent are civilians, the vast majority women and children.

As well as the risk of death or serious injury, and psychological problems if they sur-

vive into adulthood, girls are often used as sex slaves for older soldiers.

Amnesty's campaign is two-pronged. Firstly, to ensure the minimum age for recruitment is raised to 18. Britain, for example, recruits from age 16.

Even if the U.N. group reaches agreement, all it can do is tack an optional protocol onto the 1989 U.N. convention on the rights of the child.

The second goal, Amnesty said, is to get Britain to halt exports of small arms to countries where children are likely to be caught up in conflict.

That would involve more than two thirds of African and Asian countries to which Britain sells small arms, including Turkey, Sri Lanka and Uganda, it said.

In a statement, the Foreign Office insisted export licences were not given if there was a "clear identified risk" that weapons would be used "for internal repression."

It said Britain was privately investigating reports in 20 countries around the world of children under the age of 15 being used in armed conflict.

U.S. sources confirm key details of UNSCOM-U.S. cooperation: Report

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. officials have confirmed key details of accounts suggesting collusion between the U.S. and UNSCOM over Iraq, U.S. News and World Report said Sunday.

The magazine reported that it has substantiated allegations by former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter that the U.S. heavily influenced the timing and nature of confrontations with Iraq.

In particular it reported that the United States asked for the March 8 inspection of the Ministry of Defence even though Iraq's Deputy Prime

Minister Tariq Aziz warned this would be tantamount to an "act of war."

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler met twice weekly with the U.S. envoy to the U.N., Bill Richardson, to discuss operations by the U.N. Special Commission on disarmament Iraq, it continues in its Jan. 11 issue.

And it quotes a U.S. official as saying: "We gave him suggestions. I'm not saying we controlled him, but he took our advice a lot."

On the question of UNSCOM's final critical report on Iraqi compliance with U.N. weapons inspec-

tions, the magazine charges that Butler allowed the United States a "preview."

The preview came one day before the United States used it to "justify" December's airstrikes on the country during Operation Desert Fox.

Furthermore, throughout 1998 Butler routinely gave Richardson and his successor Peter Burleigh, an opportunity to comment on UNSCOM reports before they were delivered to the Security Council, sources told the magazine.

"It collaborated with us on a lot of them," said an American diplomat.

At least 16 dead in violence in Algeria

ALGER (AFP) — At least 16 people were killed over two days in violence linked to Algerian armed Islamist groups, press reports said Sunday.

On Saturday morning, three people were murdered at a fake checkpoint manned by armed Islamists near Lakhdaria in the Bouira region, some 120 kilometres east of Algiers, newspapers reported.

Two of the victims had their throats cut and the third was shot by a splinter organisation of the Armed Islamic Group.

One newspaper said five people were killed at this checkpoint. In the Blida region, south of the capital, three travellers on a main road were killed and one injured in a hail of automatic weapons fire.

A policeman was killed and a trader seriously injured Saturday morning when two armed men attacked a market in Reda Houhou in central Algeria.

A 15-year-old boy was killed Friday night near the

southern town of Medea.

One person was killed and six injured Saturday at a fake checkpoint between Tabla and Larbaa, 70 kilometres south of Algiers, where armed Islamists torched at least five vehicles.

A policeman was murdered Friday in an ambush in Baghla, around 100 kilometres east of Algiers, according to the daily El Khabar.

A hunter was killed and mutilated near Afanana, in the Tiaret region, 300 kilometres southwest of the capital.

On Saturday, security forces killed two armed Islamists in Algeria and three in the western town of Sig.

Since the beginning of Holy Month of Ramadan on Dec. 19, more than 100 people have been killed in attacks blamed on armed Islamist groups.

It is not known how exactly many armed Islamists have been killed over this period, although press reports suggest the figure to be between 50 and 100.

Turk army warns Islamists as secularists form government

ANKARA (R) — Turkey's secularist parties, under heavy pressure from a military alarmed by rising Islamist activism and political paralysis, on Sunday appeared close to a deal to form a new government after weeks of chaos.

Leftist leader Bulent Ecevit, a staunch secularist who has refused to deal with the Islam-based Virtue Party, said he had gathered sufficient support from conservative parties to form an interim government.

"We will put the finishing touches to the cabinet today," Anadolu news agency quoted him as saying. He is expected to submit the package to President Suleyman Demirel early this week.

Progress toward Ecevit's

government followed increasingly stern warnings from the armed forces, major players in Turkey's turbulent politics who have staged three coups since 1960.

The generals at the weekend issued a strong implicit warning that Virtue, the largest party in parliament, could be outlawed as a threat to democracy.

The warning, clearly directed at the Islamists, was contained in a 14-page pamphlet with the deceptively banal title "Daily Issues" and distributed to Turkish daily newspapers in a press kit.

"Our democracy will be strengthened if political formations that will destroy democracy by abolishing secularism are banned," the

mass-circulation daily Sabah quoted the pamphlet as saying.

"No democracy would be obliged to allow a political formation that uses democratic means to destroy it," the pamphlet said. The constitution outlawed Virtue's predecessor last year for trying to subvert the secularist constitution.

The pamphlet was also seen as a warning to secularist politicians to overcome squabbling that has seen five governments fall since 1995.

While the secularist vote is splitting between a number of bickering left- and right-wing parties, the Islamists are united and control an efficient campaigning machine that garners significant support

from Turkey's urban poor.

Turkey has been without an established government since November, when the conservative-led coalition of Mesut Yilmaz was toppled in a parliamentary vote over corruption allegations.

If Ecevit can form a government, it is only expected to stay in office until April when elections are scheduled, 20 months before they would normally be due.

Newspapers at the weekend also quoted from a training manual issued at an army academy that referred to the war that established Turkey as a secular republic on the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire early this century.

"A new War of National Liberation must be launched

with determination against Islamic activism that threatens the secular republic," the manual was quoted as saying.

Turkey's secularist establishment, who look to the army for leadership, suspect the Islamists of wanting to replace the secularist national charter with one based on Islamic law.

The military pronouncements followed a series of warnings from senior generals in recent weeks about Islamist activism and continued political instability.

Conservative powerbroker and True Path Party leader Tansu Ciller, in rare criticism of the army, said last week the generals should not comment so frequently on domestic politics.

Yemen will not use force to rescue British hostage

SANAA (R) — Yemen on Sunday promised it would not use force to rescue a British oil worker being held hostage by tribesmen.

A British embassy official said Ambassador Victor Henderson had met Yemen's prime minister and interior minister.

"They assured him that authorities will not use force with the kidnappers," he said. Yemeni officials had earlier said that the kidnappers of John Brooke, an employee of U.S. oilfield services firm Halliburton Co, had demanded the release of a fellow tribesman arrested on charges

of sabotage.

Brooke was kidnapped in an area east of the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Saturday just two weeks after four hostages — three Britons and one Australian — were killed during a shootout between their militant Islamist abductors and Yemeni forces.

Britain feared the Yemeni authorities might have attacked the hideout of the captors — who appeared to have a political agenda — without first giving time for a negotiated solution, although Yemen insisted the kidnappers had already begun shooting hostages.

But the latest kidnapping appeared, like almost all such abductions in Yemen, to serve tribal interests.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said on Saturday that he was deeply concerned and that it was vital that the two governments should cooperate closely.

Baptism of fire

MOSCOW (AFP) — A Russian Orthodox priest accidentally set off a hand grenade after a bout of drunken toasts at a baptism in a village Northeast of Moscow, ITAR-TASS reported on Sunday. The 45-year-old priest had been downing alcohol with the baby's grandmother when he handled the grenade and it went off, a police spokesman in Yaroslavl said. Both were injured. The priest has so far been unable to explain why he ended up holding an explosive device.

Woman jailed for assault with slippers

CAIRO (AFP) — A woman who struck her mother-in-law with slippers after she refused to help her do household chores has been sentenced to three months in jail, judicial officials said. The verdict was issued Saturday by a court in the central Egyptian town of Beni Suef after Zakia Abdul Rahim, 30, hit her mother-in-law Hanem Abdul Meguid with a pair of slippers and scratched her. Abdul Meguid, 60, suffered bruises and was briefly hospitalised.

Benin celebrates voodoo festival

COTONOU (AFP) — Beninese celebrated an annual voodoo religious festival on Sunday, heading for the historic beach of Ouidah to pray to the god Mawu for a peaceful 1999. Several ceremonies had already taken place at Ouidah on Friday at the home of Daagbo Houngbo Hounan, one of the leaders of the cult which has a devout following across this former French colony. Voodoo adepts, public personalities and some 200 visitors from Haiti, Ghana and Nigeria turned out at Ouidah and beaches in the capital Cotonou and Fidjrosse.

5-million-year-old human fossil found

ADDIS ABABA (AP) — Fossils of a prehistoric man believed to be 5 million years old have been discovered in northeastern Ethiopia, a newspaper report said Sunday. A team of researchers representing 13 countries found the fossils in the Awash Valley, where the 3.2 million-year-old partial skeleton known as Lucy was discovered in 1974. One of the researchers, Professor Tim White of the University of California at Berkeley, described the latest find as "extraordinary." Dr. Berhane Asfaw, an Ethiopian member of the team, said a human skull believed to be 2 1/2 million to 3 million years old also was found at the site.

Woman backed over child from dead husband

LONDON (R) — A British woman who gave birth to a baby boy after she was impregnated with sperm from her dead husband said on Sunday she had received 500 letters of support from around the world. Diane Blood named the baby Liam Stephen Blood after his father Stephen, who died of meningitis in 1995. The child was born on Dec. 10, a month premature. She told BBC Television: "Following the birth of Liam I have had about 500 cards and letters from people I don't know from all over the world. One from Australia said 'day'."

Peace Centre announces Israeli-Palestinian cooperation projects

TEL AVIV (AFP) — An array of Nobel Peace Prize winners and foreign political leaders gathered here Sunday to "demonstrate their support for peace" between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Peres Centre for Peace, which had invited them, used the occasion to announce the launch of a series of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation projects, worth a total of

\$60 million.

The Nobel peace laureates attending included former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, South African Bishop Desmond Tutu, former South African President Frederik de Klerk, former Costa Rican President Oscar Sanchez and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger as well as former Israeli Prime

Minister Shimon Peres himself.

Also present was Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, a member of the peace centre's board, and top Palestinian officials and 150 businessmen.

They are attending an international convention called by the centre and on Monday are to meet Palestinian President Yasser Arafat

in the West Bank town of Ramallah. U.S. peace envoy Dennis Ross and Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa are expected to join them on Monday evening.

Peres said the centre hoped to help establish "islands of cooperation" and industrial centres in order to enable Palestinians to develop their capacities in the field of high technology. Economic

cooperation between Israel and its Arab neighbours was to have been one of the keystones of the Middle East peace process when it was launched by Peres, but it has foundered as the process has run into difficulties.

A scheduled meeting of the Economic Conference for the Middle East and North Africa was cancelled last November because

of the stalemate in the peace process. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in December postponed indefinitely the second stage of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank agreed under October's Wye accords.

Palestinians fear that the peace process will remain in abeyance during the campaign for Israeli elections scheduled for May 17.

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